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# VENETIA

*Avenger of the Lusitania*

*From a Painting by C. D. Robinson*

THE CAMOUFLAGED "VENETIA"

# VENETIA

## *Avenger of the Lusitania*

BEING A NARRATIVE OF THE ADVENTURES AND CAREER OF THE YACHT "VENETIA" DURING THE WORLD WAR AS AN AUXILIARY CRUISER, INCLUDING SUCH PROOF AS EXISTS OF HER CONNECTION WITH THE EXPIATION OF ITS MOST UNFORGIVABLE TRAGEDY

BASED UPON THE CRUISER'S OFFICIAL LOG AND THE DIARIES OF SOME OF HER OFFICERS

BY

CLAY M. GREENE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
C. D. ROBINSON, W. A. COULTER
AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

SAN DIEGO
*PRIVATELY PRINTED*
1919

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JOHN D. SPRECKELS

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# FOREWORD

THIS BOOK *has been compiled out of material which, from the very nature of its subject-matter, had to be collected from sources widely separated and at very remote distances. Some of this remoteness has been, in a sense, impenetrable.*

*Those from whom information upon certain points in the narrative was expected, either could not be reached, or were so engrossed in the exacting business of the sea that they felt small concern in the business of bookmaking. A few atoms of conjecture are obviously unavoidable in a work of this kind, but such of these as have been ventured upon have not, it is hoped, in any way lessened the credibility of the vast preponderance of fact. For these reasons the task of authorship has not been approached without misgiving, and it has been finished with some degree of that most important deterrent to the inspiration of confidence still unremoved. However, at the outset the*

*magnanimous owner of the* VENETIA *duly acknowledged the difficulties involved and exacted no conditions other than that the tale be made readable and reasonably brief. If this has been done, then is its main object attained; if it has not, manifestly this author was never endowed with the constructive literary faculties that should have made it so, and the reader may find some compensation in becoming a child again and "looking at the pictures."*

*Grateful acknowledgment is made to Ensign Volney E. Howard, U. S. N. R. F., for the use of his voluminous diary, many illuminating conversations, and assistance in the work of editing; to Lieutenant Stanley S. Schnetzler for the loan of his large collection of photographs; to Ensign D. U. Nicolini for valuable information and photographs; and to Miss Constance I. Sandison for instructive criticism and assistance in the preparation of copy.*

C. M. G.

SAN FRANCISCO,
CALIFORNIA,
*October* 24, 1919.

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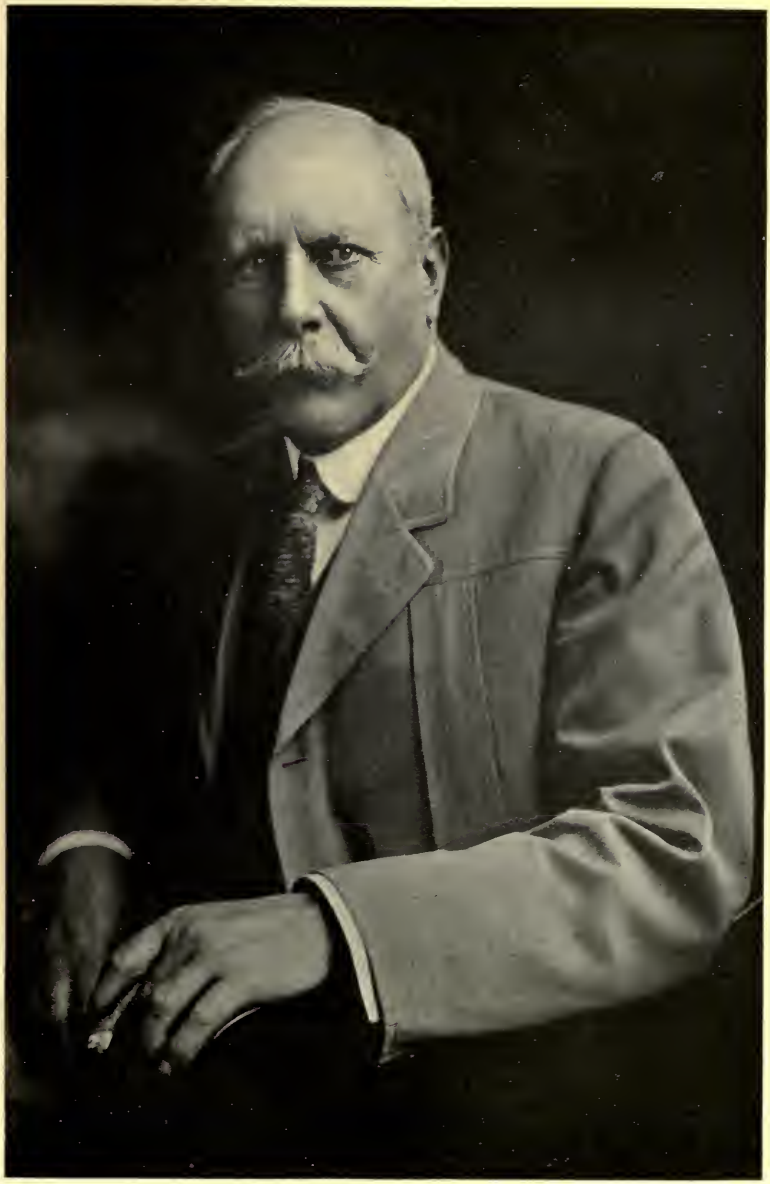


JOHN D. SPRECKELS, OWNER OF THE "VENETIA"

# PRELUDE

LATE IN JULY, 1917, *Mr. John D. Spreckels received official notification from the Navy Department at Washington that his steam yacht* VENETIA *had been accepted by the Government for immediate conversion into an auxiliary cruiser, and was to be delivered at the Mare Island Navy Yard as soon as expedient, there being an urgent demand at the time for vessels of her type. Although designed solely for pleasurable voyages across friendly waters to ports of peace, she had been reported peculiarly well adapted to the warlike activities intended for her. Her sturdy build, tested to the full in many angry seas, especially fitted her heavy deck beams for gun-platforms, and she must certainly prove of great value as a dispatch-boat, owing to her somewhat unusual speed and cruising radius. Moreover, the solid rigidity of her long stern overhang could not fail to be of inestimable value in launching the*

*destruction-dealing depth charges while sleuthing for the predatory submarine and putting it out of business.*

*If* VENETIA *could have become endowed at that moment with thought, instinct, and freedom of speech, it is not to be doubted that, true to the love for luxurious ease so inherent in her sex, she might have interposed an objection full of garrulous protest, punctuated by floods of indignant tears. Without these compelling forces of femininity, what woman can adequately express what is intended by her during her impulsive bursts of displeasure, or tones of imperious command?*

*Born at Leith, Scotland, with an unusually elaborate golden spoon in her mouth, and educated, as has been said, for a life of luxurious ease, she could scarcely have been expected to regard with anything like serene contentment the disappointing and altogether alarming intelligence that she was, willy-nilly, to be arbitrarily stripped of her gorgeous attire and dispatched into the zones of belligerent danger in the sombre habiliments of a ship of war.*

*True, however, to one never-to-be-disputed characteristic of the supposedly weaker sex, it is equally certain that she would be notoriously braver and more patient than the supposedly stronger one in moments of tribulation and pain. For now, stirred to patriotic fervor by the news from Washington, her fear would at once have fled, her keen disappointment changed to keener delight, and she would have responded to her President's call to the colors without a quiver in her graceful body of rigid steel. It may also be said with some security of conviction that*

*if some contemplative poet had been present during that very commendable change of mental attitude, he might have smiled with admiring fervor upon this lady of the sea of such perfect mould, and inspired his Muse into the framing of this quatrain:*

*Delight,* VENETIA, *that thy flag commands!*
*Forget, fair argosy, to pleasure-lands;*
*Sail on, armed to the teeth, foresworn to fight*
*Humanity's just war for Freedom's might!*

*At all events, if* VENETIA *felt at the time any mental thrill of contending emotions, these were not betrayed by any visible tremor along her graceful outlines when, quietly responding to the ebb and flow of the tide under the lee of the sheltering hills of Sausalito, her anchor was weighed, the rattling chains stowed in their lockers, and with Captain "Al" Thompson in the pilot-house, and her engines rhythmically throbbing, she turned her prow toward Golden Gate, and was soon cleaving the broad swells of the Pacific, bound south toward her home port of San Diego.*

*Two days later, as she lay quietly there at her moorings, with the beautiful outlines of majestic Coronado to starboard and the gorgeous domes and minarets of the slumbering yet never-to-be-forgotten Exposition to port, there was no sigh of protest as the crew rapidly denuded her of her dainty draperies and furnishings and carried them quietly ashore. Nor did she give forth a single sound save that of patriotic exaltation in the wild shrieks of her siren as again her engines throbbed and, amid*

*prayerful Godspeeds from the shore, she headed for the north again and danced merrily over the waves of a placid southern sea, bound for San Francisco and Mare Island, to be given over to the service of her country.*

"VENETIA" RESPONDS TO THE CALL

# VENETIA

*Avenger of the Lusitania*

## CHAPTER I

### FROM YACHT TO WARSHIP

DELIVERY AT MARE ISLAND—LONG DELAYS UNEXPLAINED—DISMANTLING AND OUTFITTING—PLACED IN COMMISSION.

ON the 6th of August, 1917, the *Venetia* arrived at Mare Island in charge of her old yachting master, Captain "Al" Thompson, with David Nicolini as first officer, and most of her original crew, a large majority of which had already enlisted in the service or signified an intention of so doing at once. Immediately upon being assigned to her moorings, she was delivered without ceremony to Captain Henry George, commandant of the navy yard, and became the property of the Government for the duration of the war.

In the breast of Captain Thompson there no doubt existed a hope that one who had so successfully navigated the *Venetia* in all pleasurable waters and weathers, might be continued in command of her, but this hope was soon dispelled by the easily gained knowledge of

regular naval officers that, because of proven fitness for the extraordinary duties that had been outlined for her, her commander would be chosen from the regular service. As he left her for what, as far as anyone knew, was the last time, with commendable magnanimity he congratulated First Officer Nicolini, who had been more fortunate than he, for the temporary commission of ensign in the U. S. Naval Reserve Force had been promised him, to issue forthwith, and with this inspiring news came the welcome assurance that he would be assigned to the *Venetia*.

Within a few days after her arrival at Mare Island, a board of survey appeared and made an extraordinarily searching examination of her from stem to stern. It seemed as though every bolt of every plate must have been inspected; every strut, beam, and knee; every deck gone over again and again in search of some defect that did not exist, for she was as sound in every part of her as though she had just come fresh from the launching ways. The survey extended over a period of two weeks, when the *Venetia* was reported to be in every way fit for any service to which she might be called, and she was recommended as ranking "A-1" among the class of converted yachts.

Following the report of the board of survey, although it was generally known that her services were sadly needed, there was delay in her transformation from a pleasure craft to a warship that was long and discouraging. Although there were many thousands of skilled laborers at work in the yard, rush of work on other vessels, both building and in course of repair, occasioned unavoidable neglect of poor, lonely *Venetia*. At all events, she lay for so long at her dock in charge of a solitary watchman that the many coats of dust and grime

blown over her by the vandal breezes of San Pablo Bay so disguised her that even her owner or designer must have failed to recognize her.

But when her turn came, work began in earnest, and her transformation from the magnificence of her yachting days into a mere shell of steel upon which to fasten the habiliments of war was most complete. Of all her sumptuous fittings nothing was left except three state-rooms, the dining-saloon, pilot-house and chart-room, and, once begun, the work was most destructive from the yachtsman's dilettante point of view. But the further transformation from shell to finished cruiser was effected in a surprisingly short space of time, and the warlike touch was given long before the interior changes were installed, by the mounting of her armament.

This consisted of two three-inch rapid-fire guns on the forecastle deck, two three-inch guns aft, one on each quarter, and two machine-guns abaft the bridge. In addition to these, there was, of course, complete rifle and pistol equipment for all hands, together with ample ammunition with which to make a respectable showing whenever the occasion might arise to demand that kind of fighting.

The transformation completed, the *Venetia* was in all essential respects a veritable vessel of war and most gaudily camouflaged after the design of Mr. Harrison Fisher. This provided her with an exceedingly gaudy coat of many colors, which made her appear ludicrously bizarre in comparison with her former modest gown of glossy white. Mr. Fisher had certainly absorbed all of the intents and purposes of the camouflage idea, for it was a strangely confusing riot of color and form which he had perpetrated as a war disguise for the hitherto modest and unobtrusive *Venetia*. This was a scheme of

pink, green, and blue spots and diamonds, on green, pink, and blue backgrounds, and every part of the ship from funnel top to water-line was similarly disfigured, with the sole exception of her decks.

Her graceful bowsprit, which gave her the sporty aspect of speed for pleasure only, was retained for beauty's sake. Later on, however, this was sawed off close to the figurehead, and became a respect-inspiring stump to support the foremast stays, as well as to minimize the danger of interference with the rigging of other vessels in war or maneuver.

The erstwhile music-room, once gorgeous in mahogany and tapestry panelings, was now severely white, and bulkheaded into three compartments, for the ship's office, the executive's office, and the medical dispensary. The smoking-room aft was now denuded of mahogany furniture and leather cushions to accommodate part of the crew, and now had two tiers of iron bunks along the side bulkheads, with another double tier fore and aft down the center. Immediately below were quartered the engine force or "Black Gang"; forward of this the petty officers were quartered, while the remainder of the crew were to be assigned to space forward under the forecastle head. The dining-saloon was now the wardroom, and the sumptuous "owner's quarters" had been divided into two staterooms, to accommodate the commanding and executive officers.

The piano, following the thoughtful direction of Mr. Spreckels, had been left aboard, and was removed to the wardroom, where it served to enliven many off-watch hours while in port, although its use was strictly forbidden at sea until after the signing of the armistice.

# CHAPTER II

## REGULAR AND "TENDERFOOT"

### "VENETIA'S" OFFICERS AND CREW—DEPARTURE FROM THE NAVY YARD—IN "MAN-O'-WAR'S ROW."

BY the 15th of October, the *Venetia* had become a veritable fighting unit of the United States Navy, duly armed and equipped. The placing of her in commission was effected without ceremonies other than her due acceptance by Captain Henry George, commandant of Mare Island Navy Yard, the hoisting of her colors and commission pennant, then the reading of orders from the Department of the Navy assigning Commander L. B. Porterfield, U. S. N., to her command and the assembling of the crew. The first roster of officers and crew when complete was as follows:

Commander L. B. PORTERFIELD, U. S. N. (*in command*)
Lieut. W. G. KREBS, U. S. N. R. F. (*Executive officer*)
Lieut. F. M. PERRY, U. S. N. R. F. (*Chief Engineer*)
Lieut. (J. G.) W. G. DONOVAN, U. S. N. N. V.
Lieut. (J. G.) J. B. ARMSTRONG, U. S. N. N. V.
Ensign DAVID NICOLINI, U. S. N. R. F.
Ensign VOLNEY E. HOWARD, U. S. N. R. F.
Asst. Surgeon P. M. DRAKE, U. S. N.
Ensign S. S. SCHNETZLER, U. S. N. (*Paymaster*)

## The Crew

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. Lopez | Sea | A. L. Fell | WT |
| R. C. Dyer | Mm2c | F. Kraft | Oil |
| L. V. Armstrong | Sea2c | M. Hickey | Oil |
| H. O. Waldo | Mm2c | J. Marshall | CBM |
| H. B. Phelps | Elr | E. L. Jacobus | CGM |
| T. N. Ryan | Y3c | A. L. Payne | BM2c |
| J. Pagdilao | Matt3c | F. F. Lagomarsino | Sea |
| C. V. Sprigg | Cox | S. H. Pickering | Sea2c |
| J. Emerius | CY | H. T. Gower | Sea2c |
| A. L. Weyand | CSt | C. C. Otis | F2c |
| F. J. Robinson | Sea2c | D. W. Reese | QM3c |
| M. D. Trine | Sea2c | W. E. Geisner | Sea |
| P. L. Leggett | Sea2c | R. C. Rickell | El2c |
| E. M. Steger | Sea | W. B. Real | F2c |
| O. H. Scott | CEr | A. Emeldi | MM1c |
| E. R. White | Oil | R. E. Hill | MM2c |
| A. T. Villalobos | Matt3c | J. W. Wilson | F2c |
| F. L. Zellner | SC4c | S. Watson | CQM |
| F. C. Meyer | F2c | J. H. Davis | CY |
| D. A. Hammond | E2cr | H. M. Brady | Sea |
| O. H. Buell | CPM | W. Hollingsworth | Sea2c |
| D. B. Rather | Sea2c | E. R. Small | Sea2c |
| L. B. Freedman | Cox | W. M. Larson | Sea2c |
| L. Burgess | Sea2c | J. F. Brumfidle | F3c |
| J. F. Loye | CMM | F. J. Hill | Y2c |

### Men shipped after going into commission

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| W. L. De Camp | CQM | A. J. Isaacsen | CM3c |
| S. E. Ensign | Sea2c | R. E. Hubbell | Sea2c |
| P. Pedro | | Matt3c | |

### Key to Abbreviations of Rank and Rating

| | |
|---|---|
| N. R. F. | Naval Reserve Force |
| N. N. V. | National Naval Volunteers |
| C. | Chief |
| QM. | Quartermaster |
| E. | Engineer |
| M. | Machinist |

*Key to Abbreviations of Rank and Rating (Continued)*

| | |
|---|---|
| MM. | Machinist's Mate |
| M following any letters of rating | Mate |
| Sea. | Seaman |
| SC. | Ship's Cook |
| Cox. | Coxswain |
| B. | Boatswain |
| F. | Fireman |
| El. | Electrician |
| Elr. | Radio Electrician |
| G. | Gunner |
| Y. | Yeoman |
| BM. | Boatswain's Mate |
| Matt. | Mess Attendant |
| Oil. | Oiler |
| WT. | Water Tender |
| Numeral and c following rating | Class of standing |

EXAMPLES

CBM., Chief Boatswain's Mate; Sea2c, Seaman Second Class; MM1c, Machinist's Mate First Class; Matt3c, Mess Attendant Third Class; CEr., Chief Radio Engineer; Elg2c, General Electrician Second Class.

Captain Porterfield said but little as the crew piped away to quarters, but with the critical eye of long naval experience, he contemplated his staff of officers, giving them his critical "once over" with orders for the ordinary routine of watches to be at once established. If there were such a thing as a mind-reader, he might have detected in that of the commander, educated to the *n*th degree in all branches of naval history, tactics, strategy, armament, and discipline, no little foreboding as to the entire efficiency of the roster of officers assigned to the vessel now under his command. This for the reason that, with the single exception of himself, it was entirely made up of "tenderfeet," a nickname which Annapolis men almost invariably apply to the ambitious but inex-

perienced volunteers of the Naval Reserve Force. It was manifestly his repugnance to this distinction of caste existing between the professional officer and the amateur, which caused Secretary Daniels to issue his order directing that both branches of the service must wear the same distinguishing devices on uniforms and caps, so that no line of invidious comparison could possibly be drawn. Truth is, however, that the result aimed at was never very satisfactorily achieved, for the Annapolis man required no device on uniform or cap for immediate identification from the "tenderfoot," while the N. R. F. man, as a rule, would have preferred the inquisitive to know at a glance that he was only in the service during the pleasure of the Secretary of the Navy.

Truly, this line of distinction is not so noticeable in the enlisted men of the navy, but still, it is drawn, nevertheless, to some extent. The old "man-o'-wars-man" smirks with the domineering disdain of professionalism when confronted with the shipmate from the farm, the desk, the bank wicket, and the fabric counter. Happily, however, the *Venetia's* crew suffered but little from the opprobrious sallies of old salts, for, like the roster of watch officers, it was almost entirely "tenderfooted," seventy-five per cent Californian, and its youthful enthusiasm, added to the cheerfulness, celerity, and efficiency with which it went about its many-sided duties, soon obliterated any dividing line between the two ratings, if, indeed, it ever seriously existed at all.

As soon as the stations for the first watch were assigned, fires were lighted under one of the boilers for the generation of steam for the auxiliary engines and galley, as well as to provide the ship with its indispensable electric luminant. To Lieutenant W. G. Krebs, the executive officer, fell the honor of standing the first watch on

deck, for upon him devolved the duty of assigning the stations for the crew, and preparing for the vast quantity of stores and armament waiting in the storehouses for prompt removal and "stowing away snug." The first regular watch from 12:00 to 4:00 was stood by Lieutenant (J. G.) W. G. Donovan, who had the first opportunity offered for the sounding of a fire alarm and assembling a fire and rescue party. This first fire drill was held with realistic "settings" in response to a call from one of the buildings in the yard, and the freshly enlisted "gobs" applied their hastily acquired knowledge with the precision and alertness of well seasoned mariners.

The pressing need of the *Venetia* in the war zone was not difficult of conjecture, for the mounting of her guns, the filling of her magazines with ammunition, the hurrying aboard and stowing away of stores, and providing for the personal comforts of officers and crew, were effected in the short space of eight busy days, when the navy yard tug *Active* came alongside, towed the *Venetia* into the stream, and she was now definitely enlisted in the service of her country, the eventful day being October 23, 1917.

The tug stood by while Paymaster Schnetzler went ashore for necessary funds. On his return the crew was assembled, all found present, the tow-lines were cast off, and the *Venetia* headed down San Pablo Bay, for the first time as a full-fledged warship, under orders to proceed without delay to the navy yard at Norfolk, Virginia.

As she steamed slowly out of Mare Island channel, even vessels under way whistled salutes to her, as if to wish her *bon voyage*. Added to this compliment, two of the anchored cruisers "manned the rigging" as a kind of

official demonstration in acknowledgment of the fact that the *Venetia* was the first craft of any kind to depart from Mare Island directly for the war zone.

After swinging to different courses off Red Rock to correct compasses, thick, foggy weather set in, and, with her fog siren sounding at regular intervals, she proceeded proudly down San Francisco Bay, and in a few minutes before four o'clock anchored in "Man-o'-War's Row" opposite the city.

COMMANDER LEWIS B. PORTERFIELD

# CHAPTER III

## WARDROOM PERSONNEL

"VENETIA'S" OFFICERS—SKETCHES OF THEIR LIVES.

BEFORE recording the events of the departure of the *Venetia* upon her naval career on the day following this never-to-be-forgotten twenty-third of October, it might be well to acquaint the reader with the faces of her officers, and at the same time preserve for future reference beyond the war days, a record of their lives furnished by themselves, or their wives, in the form of thumbnail narrative.

### Commander Lewis Porterfield, U. S. N.

The *Venetia's* first commander comes of good old Southern stock, whose ancestry dates back as far as the landing of Oglethorpe, and first saw the light at Greenville, Alabama. Information as to the date of his birth has not been given, but his appointment to the Naval Academy from his native state in 1898 should furnish sufficiently accurate material for an arithmetical calculation as to his approximate age. He graduated, after the prescribed four years, in 1902, well up on the merit list, and was assigned to the battleship *Illinois*, then cruising in European waters.

Shortly thereafter, on his own application, he was

assigned to the China Station on board of the cruiser *Chattanooga*, where he remained for three years. Returning from China, he served for a year with the armored cruiser *West Virginia*, and in 1909 was detailed to the Naval Academy as an instructor in mathematics, afterwards becoming instructor in military tactics and science. Preferring sea duty to that generally preferred detail on shore, he asked to be relieved before his usual three years "on the Beach" had expired, and was "sent a-fishing," as some naval officers are pleased to call assignments to the U. S. Fisheries Commission vessel, *Albatross*.

He made two extended cruises in Alaskan waters, going as far north as the Pribyloff Islands, at a time when there was a recurrence of poaching among the seal fisheries there. Before the European war he was in charge of the recruiting station for the Southern District, with headquarters at New Orleans, and, on account of his excellent record in that service, was detached and ordered to report for more active duties in the recruiting station at Washington, D. C., immediately following the declaration of war by the United States.

On the entry of the *Venetia* into the naval service, Commander Porterfield was detailed to her as commanding officer, and remained with her until August, 1918, when he was detached to command the cruiser *Wheeling* under orders to return home.

The commander is in every essential sense an ideal naval officer, as the stringent course of study at Annapolis insists upon making its graduates, and no doubt felt officially lonesome in assuming command of the *Venetia*, as being the only machine-made officer aboard of her. However, the detail was made in deference to his own

request, for, having seen the vessel during her yachting days in San Francisco harbor, he applied for her command immediately upon her acceptance by the Government, and this request was gladly granted. An intimate idea of his character and bearing is furnished by an officer who served with him during his command of his chosen vessel:

"If he was temperamental and flashed fire occasionally, he was as quickly over it, and I am sure never harbored a thought of malice toward a single man among officers or crew. We were all sorry when he was transferred, and all of us will remember him as having been a sterling officer and a just and considerate gentleman."

### Lieutenant William G. Krebs, U. S. N. R. F.

As this book is being written, Lieutenant Krebs, who was the first executive officer and navigator of the *Venetia*, is somewhere at sea as skipper in the merchant service, and communications requesting his photograph and a sketch of his life from his own point of view have probably not reached him. A wardroom mate, however, who knew him—and liked him, as did everyone else—gives an exceedingly favorable account of him, which will serve almost adequately, in the absence of the personal statement which it has not been possible to obtain.

Prior to his enlistment in the U. S. N. R. F. he had served as first officer, and then commander, of merchant vessels with distinction for many years, and consequently was well equipped for the duties of navigator. He often clashed with Captain Porterfield, however, as to the best approved methods of navigation, for, be it said, there is a broad and arbitrary difference between navigation as taught at the Naval Academy and the

apparently equally efficient but somewhat haphazard and speculative kind as learned by experience in the merchant marine. These ruptures culminated in a dispute on arrival at Bermuda, and his free and easy disposition led him into an intentional breach of naval etiquette, which resulted in his detachment from the *Venetia* and orders home. He was a courteous and affable fellow, and in many ways exceptionally brilliant. A fluent conversationalist, possessed of a remarkable memory for recitation; very well read, and an agreeable companion, his summary detachment was regretted by every man in the wardroom, not even excepting the commander himself, through whom it was ordered.

### Lieutenant Frank M. Perry, U. S. N. R. F.

The *Venetia's* Engineer Officer, modestly evaded the invitation to give a résumé of his life and career, but an enthusiastic shipmate and admirer had this to say of him, and said it with a show of manly feeling which left no doubt whatever as to its entire sincerity:

"Too much cannot be said of Frank Perry. He came into the reserves from the collier service and has been all over the world with these Naval Auxiliary ships. He is surely one of the best engineer officers afloat, a conscientious and hard worker who takes keen pride in his work. He is master of his engine-room, and knows how to get results with his crew. It was quite remarkable how he whipped an absolutely green crew into shape in so short a space of time, kept the engines running perfectly, and we never suffered a moment's delay through engine trouble during our entire time of service. He was in the engine-room, seemingly morning, noon and night, doing a large part of the work himself, until he had his crew thoroughly trained.

LIEUT. FRANK M. PERRY (*Chief Engineer*)

"Every man in the 'Black Gang' was with him and for him, because he knew that he knew. This proves that a man is all the happier when he is worked hard, for 'the Chief' surely did work them for all the work that was in them. On inspection days one could have spread a white tablecloth anywhere in the engine- or fire-rooms without soiling it. Perry has a good sense of humor, somewhat covered with a pose of crabbedness that is of itself provocative of humor. 'Baiting the Chief' was one of the main forms of wardroom amusement during the entire cruise, and his great earnestness led to the 'getting of his goat' many, many times. He has a home and a family of two children in Oakland, California, and would not hail from anywhere else for all the world."

ASSISTANT SURGEON PAUL M. DRAKE, U. S. N.

The "Ship's Doctor" is a young man, standing six feet two in his stockings, whom devotion to duty and close application to study have given a standing far above many in the service with twice his experience. He was born at Manhattan, Kansas, July 8, 1891, and after a thorough high school education at Denver, Colorado, he received the degree of A. B. after two years at the College of Idaho, and in 1916 became an M. D. on graduation from a medical course at the University of Kansas. He immediately became an interne at the University Hospital, and on the entry of his country into the war enrolled as assistant surgeon in the Naval Reserve Force. His first active duty was begun at Mare Island Navy Yard, May 15, 1917, and in July of that year he was duly commissioned as assistant surgeon in the regular navy and attached to the naval hospital at that important station. When the *Venetia* came to Mare

Island to be outfitted, Dr. Drake applied for regular sea service and was assigned to her, remaining with her from outfitting to final going out of commission, with a personal and medical record of which he may well be proud. He is at present attached to the naval hospital at Mare Island, and has stated his intention of remaining permanently in the naval service.

LIEUTENANT (J. G.) JOHN B. ARMSTRONG, U. S. N. N. V.

This very youthful but most efficient officer, by some years the youngest of the *Venetia's* first wardroom officers, was born in Ellensburg, Oregon, on February 12, 1895. His family moved to Tacoma in 1907, where, after a rudimentary preparation in the public schools, he entered the high school, from which he was graduated in 1913. He had already developed a fondness for the deep blue sea, for in 1910 he enlisted in the Washington Naval Militia as an apprentice seaman, in which service he continued with as much enthusiasm as it then demanded, and upon graduation entered the employ of the well known shipping firm of Dodwell & Co., Limited. On March 16, 1914, he was commissioned ensign in the Naval Militia, and in the following year was promoted to the grade of lieutenant (J. G.). On account of the pressure of business, however, he was compelled to interrupt his active interest in the militia, and, on his own request, was transferred to the Naval Militia Reserve. On the entry of the United States into the war, he severed his connection with the business firm, and adopted the more important but less profitable business of serving his country, by enlisting in the Naval Reserve Force, later on excepted in toto by the Government and renamed the National Naval Volunteers.

He was ordered to the *Venetia* September 9, 1917, and was on board as watch officer when the vessel was commissioned. From January, 1918, to November, 1918, he was executive officer, and when she was placed out of commission, after a brief period of duty at the Mare Island Navy Yard, he was released to inactive duty, with this good report of him furnished by a shipmate:

"Jack is good looking, of a sunshiny nature, keenly enjoys a good time, and is the life of any party. He worked his way from an apprentice seaman to lieutenant (J. G.) in the Naval Militia by hard work, study, and attention to duty. While very young, he is exceedingly manly for his age, an efficient officer, and a most likable shipmate."

LIEUTENANT (J. G.) WILLIAM G. DONOVAN, U.S.N.N.V.

Like Lieutenant Armstrong, this excellent young officer hails from the state of Washington, and held the rank of gunnery officer in the Naval Militia for several years, finding time to devote to that valuable service in addition to his exacting duties as president of the Donovan Lumber Company of Seattle. He is thirty-five years of age, having been born in Ludington, Michigan, in 1884. Previous to the outbreak of hostilities he was in command of the 2nd Battalion of the Naval Militia of Washington, and on the day the war was declared, April 6, 1917, was ordered to report with his command, consisting of fourteen officers and two hundred and twenty men, at the Puget Sound Navy Yard, when he was assigned to U. S. *Saratoga*. On September 8, 1917, he was detached from that vessel and ordered to report to the commandant of the navy yard at Mare Island, for duty in connection with the fitting out of the *Venetia*, and to continue on board of

her when commissioned. He then entered upon his more active naval career as ordnance and gunnery officer, with an enthusiasm and insight as to its duties that seemed to promise for him a brilliant record overseas. Unfortunately, however, for both the service and himself, he developed an alarming case of pneumonia shortly before reaching Panama, and was with deep regret removed to the U. S. Naval Hospital at Ancon, interrupting an ambitious career brilliantly begun, for in addition to being in every way courteous, sincere, affable, and genuine, he was already an efficient officer.

After six weeks in the hospital, he applied again for active service and was ordered to U. S. *Tallahassee* (then stationed at Colon), where he stayed for the remainder of the war period, and saw active service during the Atlantic Coast U-boat raids. On his discharge from the service he returned to his home at Aberdeen, Washington, where he is now engaged once more in the lumber trade, and an ardent supporter of the Naval Militia.

ENSIGN DAVID V. NICOLINI, U. S. N. R. F.

This earnest and capable officer, familiarly known as "Nick," although not born of the sea was certainly born for it, and in every way justified the horology of his birth-constellation, which was, in all probability, Aquarius. He was born in San Francisco, September 20, 1878, received a public school education, and was, much against his will, apprenticed in turn to a tailor and a plumber. But the lure of the "vasty deep" was ever on him, and, severing the maternal apron-strings, he made several cruises on the clipper ship *Shenandoah* between San Francisco and New York. Then he shipped on board of the P. C. S. S. Co.'s steamer *Walla Walla*,

LIEUT. J. B. ARMSTRONG

ASST. SURGEON P. M. DRAKE

LIEUT. W. G. DONOVAN

ENSIGN D. V. NICOLINI

and was transferred to another vessel ten days before the *Walla Walla* was rammed and sunk, thereby demonstrating that his birth-constellation was a lucky one for this time at least. On the steamer *Cottage City*, however, he made many trips between Seattle and Alaska, and remained with her until she was shipwrecked on the Alaskan coast. Then followed several trips on the run from Alaska to Nome as quartermaster of the S. S. *Oregon*, after which, as third officer of the S. S. *Santa Clara*, he was again shipwrecked off Humboldt Bar. Believing that the Northeast Coast was an unlucky one, he shipped in the service of the Oceanic Steamship Company on various steamers running to Australia, and then joined the yacht *Venetia*, on which he served, by rapid stages of advancement, as third officer, radio officer, and first officer, through many cruises with Mr. Spreckels. On the outbreak of the war he offered his services to his country, served on board of the *Venetia* until within a few weeks of the termination of her war career, and hopes to be again one of her officers as soon as she has been finally surrendered by the Government.

### Ensign Volney E. Howard, U. S. N. R. F.

Ensign Howard, division and watch officer, comes of the best California stock, being the grandson and namesake of Colonel Volney E. Howard, pioneer attorney of great distinction, to whom was entrusted the framing of the first Constitution of the state of California. His mother was Miss Kate Whiting, eldest daughter of Colonel Whiting, for many years Indian Commissioner for the Pacific Coast, and afterwards a prominent land owner in the Los Angeles of early days. The subject of this sketch was born in the southern metropolis February 6, 1879. He was educated in the public schools

and high school of Los Angeles, but, preferring a business career, instead of following in the footsteps of his illustrious grandfather, he decided not to pursue a college course and entered the insurance business, in which he has been more than usually successful. A fondness for salt water was inspired by small-boat yachting in the waters contiguous to San Pedro, and on the outbreak of the war he at once enlisted in the Naval Reserves, being so fortunate as to secure the tentative rank of ensign, the duties of which he was compelled to perform while preparing himself for the examination which secured him his commission at the end of three months. He described his work at the San Pedro Training Station as having been most confining, for he was soon appointed an instructor, and, having had no naval experience whatever, it was necessary for him to "bone up" at night on the lessons he was expected to teach on the following day. Fearing that he might be retained in this unwarlike routine, he applied for sea service and was assigned to the *Venetia*, remaining with her from her outfitting to her placing out of commission soon after the cessation of hostilities. Ensign Howard remained in the service for several months, attached to the offices of the Twelfth Naval District, when he was finally discharged, and now resides with his wife and two children in San Francisco, where he is building up a business in the iron and steel trade.

Ensign Stanley S. Schnetzler, Paymaster U. S. N.

The *Venetia* "Pay" was born at Toledo, Ohio, September 14, 1893; attended the public schools there, then Wayland Academy at Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, which is an affiliated preparatory school for the University of Chicago. Before entering upon his projected course,

LIEUT. S. S. SCHNETZLER
(*Paymaster*)

ENSIGN VOLNEY E. HOWARD

LIEUT W. L. DE CAMP

however, he removed to California with his mother, took up a residence at Palo Alto, and was graduated from Stanford University in the class of 1917. Immediately upon graduation he decided upon a naval career, began a course of study at Mare Island Navy Yard for the Pay Corps, and then transferred to the Naval Pay School at Washington, D. C. When the *Venetia* entered the service he was detailed to the many duties embodied in her outfitting, was with her constantly during her service overseas, and assisted in placing her out of commission. Having adopted the Paymaster's service with the intention of remaining in it permanently, after a few months' duty at Mare Island, he was transferred to the Atlantic Coast, and is now an assistant paymaster, attached to U. S. S. *Colhoun* at Boston.

It is said that at first the *Venetia* wardroom officers regarded him with some little suspicion on account of his name. But in spite of his assurance that his ancestors had been Swiss to the backbone, he had already been given the nickname of "Prush" and it still clings to him, as nicknames in the navy always do. He is a typical paymaster, which means that he is a good watchdog over his section of the U. S. Treasury; never pays out a cent except under pressure, and never makes a mistake in his accounts. In addition to his official efficiency, he is well bred, handsome, well read, an interesting conversationalist, and a prime favorite with the ladies.

LIEUTENANT (J. G.) W. L. DE CAMP, U. S. N.

This sterling young officer had not yet reached this rank when he joined the *Venetia* at Mare Island. He was then chief quartermaster only, but water does not

reach its level with more certainty than does efficiency in the navy—especially during war times—and of this axiom De Camp proved indeed a shining example.

He entered the regular navy when only sixteen years of age as an apprentice, and, at once developing a liking for wigwagging, he devoted himself to that branch of the service with such assiduity and show of skill that long before he was eighteen he had gained the reputation of being one of the most expert and accurate signalmen in the navy. Popular with officers and men alike, he made his value apparent at once, and when he asserted that he would not be long a chief quartermaster everybody believed him, because there was no time off duty when he could not be found at close study. On arrival at Philadelphia, under recommendation from Captain Porterfield, he applied for examination in the rank of ensign, passed a little better than satisfactorily, and received his commission shortly after arrival at Gibraltar. Not satisfied with this, however, he continued his studies, and was soon rewarded with the commission of lieutenant (J. G.) in the regular service, a rank which he was holding as executive officer of U. S. S. *Black Hawk* when this sketch was written.

### Ensign John Alexander, U. S. N. R. F.

This ambitious young salt was assigned to the *Venetia* with the grade of boatswain, but he had too much experience as a practical seafaring man to continue very long as a petty officer on a vessel whose watch officers were mostly amateurs. Naturally, then, this extended and varied experience, added to a liking for close and persistent study, stood him in such good stead that he had earned a seat in the wardroom mess before the *Venetia* steamed away from Mare Island. He had been

a deep-water sailor during most of his life, had fought through many gales in stranger seas, and, with the hard knocks inseparable from such a career, had gained a considerable store of practical knowledge. A plain, blunt, hearty seaman in the rough, he provided himself with a fairly complete education through burning the midnight oil when off duty, besides taking correspondence courses in navigation and such other studies as should complete the official standing of a "pilot throughout the wide courses of the mysterious deep." The *Venetia* lost a good officer when "Jack" was detached at Bermuda and ordered to the command of the seagoing tug *Barnegat* to replace her former chief officer, "surveyed" out of the service.

# CHAPTER IV

## SOUTHWARD HO!

RESERVES VERSUS THE REGULAR NAVY—AN OLD SALT "CALLED DOWN"—BRIEF TOUCH AT SAN DIEGO—BOUND FOR PANAMA.

AT 1:25 in the afternoon of October 24th, Executive Officer Krebs reported to Captain Porterfield that the steam siren had been tested, the engine-room telegraphs and steering engines proved O. K., and that the ship was ready to proceed to sea. With the laconic "very well" of the commander, who proceeded at once to his plate-glass conning station in the pilot-house, preparations were made to get under way with Lieutenant (J. G.) J. B. Armstrong, N. N. V., as officer of the deck. All hands were called, heaving in began at once, anchor was aweigh at 2:06, at 2:15 the order to stand by was given, and at 2:16 the *Venetia's* engines responded to the telegraph from the pilot-house, and under "slow ahead" she headed for Golden Gate bound for the zones of conflict.

This was indeed good-bye. To Captain Porterfield (the commanding officer of a vessel is always automatically promoted to that rank, no matter what his commissioned rating may be) it was an old story, for departure toward belligerent waters was merely one of the ever-welcome necessities of his glorious calling. To

the experienced, weather-beaten and "scrap-loving" jackies it was equally a matter, not so much of indifference as of self-congratulation, that, after the long weeks of getting into fighting trim, the ship was under way at last and there would be "something doing" in the not very distant beyond.

But to the young officers, commissioned after as many months of intensive training as those of the regular service had taken years to accomplish, it was a different matter—one of speculation, of doubt, of mental calculation, and mystery yet to be fathomed beyond the misty horizons toward which they sped, to emerge into the light of experiences they knew not of. Such, too, must have been the mental attitudes of the young volunteer mariners of the crew who were making their first communion with the—at least to them—mysterious sea, which might bring forth pleasure or adventure, disaster, suffering or death, according to the will of the Almighty. They were in His hands now, and those who had been schooled in the comforting teachings of religious faith or established creed must have felt their souls moved by a sense of hopeful security not shared by those consciences tutored in the vastly more confusing pretenses of heresy and unbelief.

Whatever misgivings, doubts—and perhaps there were fears, too—in the minds of the *Venetia's* heroes-to-be, they must have been dispelled in contemplation of the honors and glories of her destiny, as yet unfulfilled, but in which each one of them felt as sure he was one day to share as he was certain to be part of her day and night routine.

These thoughts and many others, hopeful, despairing, and foreboding, must have encumbered many minds in the *Venetia's* personnel as she pulsed her way past the

city front, Fort Scott, Alcatraz, the Exposition grounds, Fort Point, and Bonita Light, with the Pacific's breezes chanting her song of revenge, and the hum of her engines taking up the soulful refrain, "Remember the *Lusitania!*"

Just before sunset the life-boat crews were mustered for drill for the first time in active service, and every one of the boys thrilled with that gnawing appetite for work which has been characteristic of the Yankee tar ever since there was an American Navy and a just cause for it to defend. At nightfall all lights were ordered out, also for the first time, for in the zones of danger the slightest spark might betray the ship's location to an enemy, and officers and crew must accustom themselves to perform their duties in darkness. This was no easy matter at first, and frequently occasioned remarks both jocular and profane. But the latter were more or less leavened by overflowing good-nature, except among the selfish few to whom the lighting of a single cigarette would mean the convening of a court martial.

At sunset the next afternoon Point Arguello Light gave silent notice that the *Venetia* was abreast of Santa Barbara. Two men of the watch stood close together peering over the port bow toward the light. One of them leaned upon the shoulder of the other and sobbed loud enough for a near-by boatswain's mate to hear, and he laughed. The young man who had attracted this unusual attention turned with an angry start, dried his cheek upon his sleeve, and spoke:

"What's troubling you?"

"Well, nothin' much," replied the mate, a trifle surprised at the aggressive attitude of his questioner. "But I think you orter know right here that it's men we want in this service, not babies."

"You mind your damn business, will you?" was the retort. "I wouldn't trust any man who hadn't a touch of the woman in his soul, further than the length of one of those guns there. And listen. My home's the other side of that light, and just before we sailed they wired me that my old mother had died and they were to bury her to-day. Baby, eh? Some day or other there may be a spent torpedo sloshing about alongside of us, and I'll be fast to it screwing off the war-head while you're on deck piping out your prayers."

The reply of the mate was profanely enthusiastic as he grasped the young seaman by the hand, asked his pardon for having made such a (phrase deleted) mistake with reference to his manhood. Then, with an outburst of admiring blasphemy, he voiced his belief that the threat with reference to the torpedo would be duly carried out at the first opportunity. As for himself, however, he would be on deck all right during this foolhardy proceeding, but the kid was wrong in regard to the prayers, for he "never knowed none."

At sunrise the next morning Point Loma Light bore directly ahead and at 7:47 the *Venetia* was abeam of it and heading toward the channel to San Diego harbor. While a touch at the home port was mainly for the purpose of sending one of the crew to the naval hospital, Captain Porterfield believed that further official orders might be awaiting him there, and, moreover, he had a notion that Mr. Spreckels might be interested further to inspire his patriotism by personally noting how much less ornamental and much more businesslike in her amazing camouflage his beautiful yacht had become in so brief a space of time. But Mr. Spreckels was absent from his residence, and after a hurried call upon the commanding officer of the U. S. S. *Yorktown* and the re-

ceiving of the expected orders, Captain Porterfield directed that permission to get at once under way be signaled to the station commander. This being granted in accordance with naval procedure, in less than half an hour the *Venetia's* anchor was aweigh and she stood out for the open sea heading south.

# CHAPTER V

## INTENSIVE TRAINING

ALONG THE COAST—EXHAUSTIVE DRILLS—SECOND-HAND ARMAMENT—DOTTER PRACTICE—FIRST BAPTISM OF BAD WEATHER—TREACHEROUS TEHUANTEPEC.

THE first days down the coast of Lower California were quite devoid of interest to the many young men of the crew, who up to the present time had regarded their connection with *Venetia's* personnel as being more or less of a vacational yachting cruise. Save for the occasional hazy outlines of that ruggedly mountainous and residentially inadvisable coast, with now and then a passing glimpse of distinctly desert islands, there was little to record in the numerous diaries aboard. Moreover, if there had been any, there was no time for literary efforts, except during the off-watch hours. There were never any lights visible during the night watches, the regulations with reference to a darkened ship being rigidly enforced always, except for uncertain intervals of very few minutes' duration.

But the daylight hours were never idle ones, for in one way or another there was bustle and activity always. Evidently Captain Porterfield had made up his mind never to deviate the fraction of a point from the wise

and inflexible law written in the books of experience, that preaching is one thing and practice entirely another. Aside from himself, all the *Venetia's* watch officers were Reserve men. All had been duly commissioned, after searching examinations, because of official belief in their ability to perform satisfactorily all the duties attached to their respective ranks, and the enlisted personnel was as likely a body of patriotic young men as had ever been assigned to a war-vessel, after months of intensive training at San Pedro and other naval stations.

But the officer of the regular navy, with every qualification for fitness in the service educated and disciplined into him, is "from Missouri." He must be shown that every one of the sturdy machines placed under his command will function to his own personal satisfaction, for, once at sea, no one else has anything to say to the contrary, and the skipper's will is law.

So drills, surveys, tryouts, and examinations were frequent, and, in fact, almost continuous. Immediately after leaving San Diego, Dr. Drake was ordered to test the eyes of battery officers, gun's crews, and deck forces, irrespective of previous examinations and signed certificates of O. K. The captain had determined to satisfy himself that there must be no mistakes in detecting the colors on blinking signal lights at night, or waving semaphores by day, so with the characteristic loyalty of commanders afloat to their own, he must have the opinion of his ship's doctor, no matter what any number of others had reported. The boat crews were drilled many times in fitting out their boats for "abandon ship"; there were small-arm and fire drills, and intensive training in finding one's way about in the darkness.

Before leaving Mare Island, Captain Porterfield had expressed displeasure at the three-inch guns supplied

the ship, for they were hastily placed aboard from a cruiser now laid up in ordinary, but it was shown that there were no others available within the time that the *Venetia* must be in commission. Then, too, the gun-platforms did not at all conform to his notion of what they should be, and so, in the quiet waters of the rapidly nearing tropics, the entire machinist's force was set to work enlarging and strengthening them. This done, the crews were assembled for exhaustive gun drills, sight-setting, and "dotter practice."

For the benefit of the landsman who may not have prepared himself for a quiz on naval terms and practices, it is explained that dotter practice is a rudimentary drill in gun pointing, training and firing. The dotter, as its name implies, is an appliance set up on the gun, upon which is a small target connected electrically with the sights, and upon which dots are punctured when hits are made. These hits are supposititious only, in that the gun is sighted upon a distant object, the trigger pulled, and if the sight be true, it will be recorded upon the dotter target.

This course of rudimentary gunfire, having been declared complete when the dotter recorded several bull's-eye hits, a floating target was launched overboard and the ship moved away to a distance of approximately two thousand yards. One round of ammunition was furnished to each gun, the platforms were manned by full crews, and everything was reported ready. Instruction was passed about by the experienced as to the most approved ways of resisting the shock of gunfire, and then came the order:

"Number One—Fire!"

The trigger yielded with a click, responsive to the nervous jerk from the "shooting finger" of the gun cap-

tain, but Number One refused to respond and remained stubbornly silent, while Captain Porterfield gave every pantomimic gesture that might express indignant contempt. It was duly reported that Number One had misfired, owing to a defective firing-pin, and the breech-block remained closed for the twenty minutes required by the regulations, after which time somebody's mistake or oversight with reference to the defective firing-pin would be rectified. Meanwhile, attention was directed to the three other guns, which behaved with similar disregard for whatever new irritability of temperament might be lying beneath the dignified and taciturn exterior of the commander. The younger officers, ever on the alert to learn from observation just what the temperament and demeanor of an experienced naval officer ought to be, had obviously made up their minds that it was better to betray no temper whatsoever, taking example from the stern though wavering reticence of their commanding officer.

But now it was quite apparent that he had a temper after all, and that it was rapidly beginning to explode could be easily detected by the snap in his steel-blue eyes and a nervous twitching of his mouth as, one after another, guns Two, Three and Four refused to bark in obedience to the quick snaps of their firing-pins.

"Number One is ready now, sir!"

"Very well—Fire Number One!"

Before the gun captain could place his finger upon the trigger, Captain Porterfield noticed that the officer in charge of the crew of Number One was backing nervously away from the gun with his fingers in his ears, and shouted madly:

"Somebody stop that man or he'll back overboard! Fire, will you?"

TARGET PRACTICE

AFTER A STORM

"The target's drifted away, sir."

By this time the patience of the captain had become quite exhausted, and he shouted with rising anger:

"Well, shoot at something. See if you can hit the moon!"

Number One belched forth a mighty roar with as much aggressiveness as though it had not so recently disgraced itself, and shortly thereafter the others behaved as all self-respecting guns should, whether at times of practice or in action. Then the automatic guns were tested with satisfactory results, as the captain gave orders for the drifting target to be left to work out its own salvation, and the *Venetia* again started on her course, while her saturnine commander turned silently toward the chart-room. As he moved away, one of the younger officers whispered to his roommate at his elbow:

"If we'd been at war with Mexico, and that tub flying the Mexican flag we passed just now had been a gunboat, it's a cinch that she'd have had us under orders to abandon ship long ago."

The details of the above incident were furnished by one of the officers, who is prepared to vouch for their entire accuracy. But Ensign Volney E. Howard, who was officer of the deck during that afternoon watch, no doubt inspired by motives of pride and patriotism, makes a strangely contradictory entry in the ship's log as follows:

Meridian to 4:00 P.M.

Steering S 78E. At 3:00 abandon ship drill—boats not lowered. —3:09 started firing 3-inch guns, one round of ammunition for each gun.—3:10 No. 1 gun misfired, cause, defective primer.—3:13 No. 2 gun fired at 6,000 yards.—3:15 No. 3 gun fired at 6,000 yards.—3:16 No. 4 gun fired at 6,000 yards. After 30 minutes, No. 1 gun was un-

loaded.—At 3:30 reloaded and fired at range of 7,500 yards.—At 3:31 fired 15 rounds from port auto. At 3:33 fired starboard auto.

VOLNEY E. HOWARD, Ensign, U. S. N. R. F.

Orders were at once given that the four gun crews in connection with the machinist's force must make sure that no misfires should occur in the future. Then the *Venetia* proceeded under full speed on a southerly course without incident other than constant drills in all departments, until the evening of the first of November, when a strong wind set in from E. N. E. and all batteries and boats were made secure for heavy weather.

The *Venetia* was now beginning to labor somewhat heavily in the generally tempestuous waters of the Gulf of Tehuantepec. It had been duly reported to those who had not until now been "down to the sea in ships" that these swirling, choppy waters had long been the acid test of immunity from seasickness to all voyagers along the Pacific Coast, and it was soon developed that a mere handful, outside of the "old salts" of the *Venetia's* personnel, were in any sense equal to this grueling and humiliating test of their seaworthiness. Happily, however, the mantle of night soon cast a kindly and considerate pall over the still forms of the stricken missing ones, and as no lights were shown aboard, the sufferers struggled bravely to be unafraid in the oft-disturbed silence of their darkened quarters. Then when morning came and all was calm again, the derelicts of the night before were piped merrily to stations to "dry ship," nearly all of them declaring with undebatable conviction that they had far rather fight through an encounter with a score of submarines than struggle through another gale off the Gulf of Tehuantepec.

# CHAPTER VI

## THE WORLD'S GREAT WATERWAY

ARRIVAL AT PANAMA—THROUGH THE CANAL—THE AMERICAN PLAN FULLY JUSTIFIED—ARRIVAL AT COLON.

JUST before dawn on November 4th, Banco Point Light was made out four points on the port bow, and those not hitherto posted were informed by the wise ones that Panama would be reached on the following morning. At 10:15 a war-vessel was sighted dead ahead, and two hours later the *Venetia* overhauled the U. S. S. *Cheyenne* with a submarine in tow, and two other submarines following in her wake under their own power. This incident was most pleasurable in that it was the first time since leaving San Diego that the Stars and Stripes had been seen floating from the main-truck of a sister vessel of war.

The day was spent in hastily dispatching the usual routine of drills; boats and ordnance were inspected and everything bright polished clean as a golden spoon, so that the *Venetia* should appear as neat and trim as a war-vessel may, and make the best possible showing on entering the canal at Panama. At 5:50 on the following morning Point Bona Light flashed out the interesting warning that the Pacific entrance to the great canal lay not very far beyond. At daylight the mine pilot came

aboard, whose duty it was to guide the ship through the narrow channel between the vast fleet of submerged mines planted to render the entrance to the great waterway impregnable to alien ships.

In the early forenoon the perfunctory duties of the customs and quarantine officers were dispatched and the canal pilot came aboard and assumed full charge of the ship as far as its navigation was concerned. But before entering the canal, sickness again disturbed the peace and contentment of the ship's friendly company, and she waited while Doctor Drake removed two of their number to the naval hospital at Ancon, detached, as everyone believed, for good.

These were Lieutenant (J. G.) W. G. Donovan, Jr., N. N. V., and Chief Pharmacist's Mate C. W. Buell, U. S. N. While the latter would be sadly missed, owing to his great efficiency in the exacting duties of the medical department, there was regret of the keenest nature, both in wardroom and forecastle, for the untimely detachment of Lieutenant Donovan, of Aberdeen, Washington, an efficient young officer, a pleasant companion, and full of ambition to do honor to his country's flag during the exciting scenes already foreshadowed for him and his shipmates in far-off waters beyond the beautiful calm of these peaceful tropic seas.

The passage through the Panama Canal, that enduring monument to the munificent foresight of the United States, and the magic skill of Major General George W. Goethals who constructed it, was effected with a machine-like efficiency and speed that surprised even these rigidly trained men of the regular navy, to whom celerity and completeness are considerations not to be slighted in any detail.

On the first approach from the somewhat remote

THROUGH CULEBRA CUT

anchorage, the entrance to the canal, owing to the low-lying land on the Pacific side, is barely visible. But gradually, as threading through the tortuous mine channel, the massive breakwaters seem to rise suddenly out of the placid bay and just as suddenly you are slowly gliding between them. The entrance was reached shortly before noon, when the first canal pilot was replaced by the quiet and somewhat uncommunicative guide of the Miraflores Lock. It should be known that each lock along the line of the great waterway has its own pilot, whose interests and knowledge apparently are confined to his especial zone, all the others being of no particular interest to him.

As the first lock is approached through the broad channel at the sea level, and its massive proportions loom up ahead with the frowning severity of a mighty fortress, there arises a mental speculation as to whether, after all, the sea-level canal so pathetically insisted upon by Bunau-Varilla, the great French engineer, might not have been better, in that a clear and uninterrupted passage would have done away with so much official red tape, which always leads to delay.

But this passing reflection is soon dispelled in the quickly instilled knowledge that there is no delay of even a minute's duration, for all of the machinery of this great American leviathan moves with the regularity of clockwork. Immediately upon entering the approach to the lock, the giant electric "mules" are attached to the ship, one on either side, and as quickly she is moving slowly forward as the great flood-gates part with the same silence and apparent ease that a child would swing open the unlocked doors of its nursery. The rapidity of operation in climbing the two flights of the Miraflores Lock surprised all who up to then had not been "in the

know." The first flight was passed in eighteen minutes, and in twenty-two minutes more the *Venetia* had cast off the Miraflores "mules," waved farewell to the first pilot, and was waiting for the second, who was standing by to pilot her into the single lock at Pedro. The taking aboard of the Pedro pilot, the making fast and casting off of the mules, and the getting under way under the ship's own power were effected in some minutes less than half an hour, and soon Gaillard Cut was reached.

While the interested onlookers were marveling at the rapidity of tropical growths, which in comparatively so brief a period had covered the deep excavations with brilliant tangles of verdure, Culebra Cut was entered. This huge excavation—whose slipping sides and shifting foundations were, in the opinion of every engineer who had been employed on the canal, or was disappointed because he had not, the oft-predicted certain impediment to the success of the canal—seemed now certainly rigid and immovable as Mount Whitney. Beyond the puffing and snorting of two or three mighty dredgers that seemed to be widening the channel rather than drawing débris from its bottom, there were no visible signs of any previous disturbance, and, in reply to a question from one of the young watch officers on the bridge, the pilot said:

"All that stuff had to get down to bed-rock sometime, and they say it's there now sure."

After an hour spent in admiring contemplation of a gorgeous tropical panorama along this stretch of the canal, Gatun Lake is entered with thrills of unexpected delight, for here is even the most travel-sated eye gladdened at the sight of the most amazingly beautiful tropical scene in all the world! Here was the turgid and rebellious Chagres River, which many of the world's

IN SAN MIGUEL LOCKS

DOCKS AT COLON

greatest engineers had deemed impossible of controlling except through some unrestricted passage to the sea, impounded and harnessed, its waste waters only permitted to escape over the vast stone waterways in foaming cataracts, while the rest of it pours calmly and without protest into the locks of the great canal. Full speed is permitted in Gatun Lake, and the two and a half hours allotted for the passage through its vast and gloriously beautiful reaches, its views of flooded gorges, and its scores of floating islands that nod with the swell of passing vessels, is barely sufficient so to fasten it upon the memory that none of its inspiring details can be forgotten, for to forget one of them must truly cloud the glamours of recollection.

Amidst the glories of a twilightless tropical sunset Gatun Locks were passed and the *Venetia* moored at her dock in the broad canal basin, nearly all of her company impressed with a sense of regret, for that the less than eight hours occupied in the passage of the great canal had not been long enough.

# CHAPTER VII

## THROUGH THE CARIBBEAN

DEPARTURE FROM THE ISTHMUS—MORE INTENSIVE DRILLS—REGULAR SERVICE AND RESERVES AGAIN—SHIPS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT—FROM THE CARIBBEAN INTO THE ATLANTIC.

THE stay at Colon was of but two watches of four hours duration, and, much to the regret of would-be sightseers in the ship's company, shore leave was not granted, for it was known that the ship would cast off and put to sea as soon as mechanics from the station repair-ship had completed the extensions of gun-platforms, and the necessary stores had been taken aboard. In the meantime the commanding officers of the station ships exchanged official and friendly visits with Captain Porterfield, and the *Venetia's* officers and crew had their first opportunity to inspect from afar a submarine base of any magnitude, "mothered" by the monitor *Tallahassee*. Salutary lessons were learned by the uninitiated as to the appearance of that "danger-hound" of the deep from all points of maneuver.

At four o'clock that afternoon the mine pilot came aboard, mooring lines were cast off, and, threading her way through the tortuous channel between many hundreds of those concealed instruments of sure destruc-

tion, the *Venetia* made a course under full speed to the open sea.

The *Venetia* was now entering waters where danger threatened, if it did not actually exist. The depredations of German submarines along the North Atlantic coast had already been officially reported, and it was deemed more than likely that some of them had been sent to inflict their unwarned death-blows upon the heavy commerce of the West Indies. Accordingly all armaments were carefully tested and proved ready for action; boat crews were perfected in the duties of abandoning ship, which must be done with dispatch; all lights out at night became now a matter of necessity instead of drill, and instruction must by this time have been developed into the perfected duties of actual warfare.

Captain Porterfield paced the deck slowly, from dead aft to "'way for'ard," his taciturn face bearing an expression of mingled concern and speculation. His practised eye inspected everything with critical thoroughness, and as far as anyone knew—to judge from his uncommunicative demeanor—he appeared to be satisfied. His chief concern was as to the entire efficiency of Executive Officer Krebs, who was also navigator. He had had much experience in the merchant service, having sailed through the seven seas for many years, but it is seldom that the ways of the merchant marine are as careful as those of the navy. Expert navigator though he be, his calculations were not sufficiently exact to meet the requirements of the studiously trained Annapolis man. Krebs had a notion, as once expressed in the hearing of the captain:

"As long as you can see ten miles in any direction, why afflict yourself with brain-fag and wear out your pencils in trying to get closer?"

The captain, however, insisted upon having the exact position figured out to within a quarter of a mile of what it should be, at 8 A.M., noon and 8 P.M., since both his teaching and experience had taught him that the sun fixes the approximate position at meridian, while the same result is easily possible at night when good star sights are obtainable. But as the days waned and there was no apparent error made, either in the navigation of the ship or the carrying out of her ordinary routine, the tenseness of the captain's features relaxed into an expression of calm that denoted something like satisfaction and contentment, no matter what contrary opinions his mind may have held.

In the waning of these days, too, the more hurriedly prepared officers began to feel themselves in every way amply capable of performing the duties demanded of them and grew more and more "cocky" with each change of watch. Four years of Annapolis grind seemed to them an extravagant waste of time as far as the handling of a ship at sea was concerned. As for the navigators trained in the merchant marine, they felt inwardly sorry for the fuss and feathers and splitting of straws evidently drilled into the regular navy officer to make him altogether too technically precise and temperamentally irritable.

Be all this as it may, the *Venetia* danced merrily through the blue waters of the Caribbean Sea, true always on her course, and every graceful rise and fall at the bidding of its ever-heaving swells seemed like an approving curtsey to the efficiency of her navigators. Poets who have perhaps had only a passing glance at this "sheet of sapphire blue," or else traversed it during one of its not very frequent calms, have commented upon "its fragrant atmospheres of sun-kissed, torrid

EACH MORNING'S "SWABBING DOWN"

CARIBBEAN HEAD SEAS

stillness." But it is angry oftener than it is placid, as many of the *Venetia's* company can attest, although it is reverently held in gentle memory when recalling that fateful first night across the Gulf of Tehuantepec.

Heavy head winds, accompanied by seas that sent clouds of warm spray over the bows, continued for two days without interruption. These at times disturbed the regularity of drills, which only the "tactic-mad Skipper," as one of the young officers dubbed him, deemed necessary in the somewhat disheartening circumstances. But it was disheartening only to a few, for, now, after nearly three weeks in sea service, the ship's company felt that it was actually becoming weather-beaten, and could even eat with comfort at sea.

There were exceptions, however, for, one morning, one of the immune officers met another who was not, reclining on a transom, and accosted him. Stirred by that cruel sense of humor which seems ever a part of the nature of the mariner to whom *mal de mer* is an excitant to ribald laughter, he touched the reclining youth on the shoulder and announced:

"There's a heavy swell outside, and he wants me to invite you to dinner. There's corned beef and cabbage, and lemon pie."

The retort of the sick man, it may be said, is not printable, but anyone who has been in a similar condition must have a very clear notion of what it was, as the disturber placed his hands over his ears and retreated under the volley of impolite invective.

Ships that pass in the night are unfathomable mysteries in modern war times, for they glide across the almost black distance like gaunt ghosts, with never a light to determine their direction, or a signal to disclose their identity. Several of these were sighted during the

first two nights out from Colon, and in each case everything was made ready either to resist an attack or to make one. Under these conditions neither friend nor foe is recognizable, and everyone knew that the deadly submarine gives neither challenge nor warning.

On the third night out from Colon the ship's company received its first thrill of excitement having any actual connection with warfare in its real sense, but it was quite disappointing in its brevity and resultant peace. A white light flashed suddenly on the horizon and the entire watch fastened excited attention upon it, as orders were given for the boat crews to stand by and the gunners flew to their posts. Whether the light came from the flashlight of a friendly or an enemy cruiser, or from the discharge of a gun aimed at the *Venetia*, no one knew of course. But no mistake must be made in times like these, and there was not an officer or enlisted man aboard who did not hope that it really meant trouble.

The flash appeared no more, however, and on *Venetia* plunged through the still angry seas and brisk head winds, buffeting them in the determined hope that there would be better luck next time, and meanwhile boat crews were kept ever on the alert, so that the ship might be quickly abandoned if some stealthy torpedo should dash into her during the night.

On the following morning Navassa Island Light flashed out abeam, but was interesting mainly because it was the first land made out since leaving Colon. The ship was now at least within radio distance of most of the West Indies, and shortly after daylight the passage between Cuba and Hayti was made. During the afternoon and first night watches, Castle Island, Great Inagua Island, and San Salvador were sighted and passed; the landing of Columbus was mentally re-enacted, and, still

pushing into strong heading seas and winds, the *Venetia* nodded bravely to the Atlantic Ocean for the first time as a fighting unit of the American Navy.

When passed for the first time, speculations as to the historical standing of these islands are as inevitable as the usual ceremonies attendant upon the first crossing of the Equator, and this was not neglected among the tenderfeet of the *Venetia.* Which of the Bahamas was the first land discovered by Columbus? Was it San Salvador, and if so, should it be called by that name or Watling's Island? Could these islands be justly called America, and why was the Western Hemisphere named after Amerigo Vespucci if Columbus discovered it? All of these points were duly discussed, the final impressions being largely to the credit of the immortal Christopher, as a matter of course.

# CHAPTER VIII

## TOWARD THE WINTER-TIME

HEADED NORTH'ARD—THE GUNS STILL REBELLIOUS—A PLACID "OFF HATTERAS"—LEAGUE ISLAND NAVY YARD—A BOY WHO FORGOT.

THE first day along the Florida coast was a decided change for the better. The smooth sea and soft northerly breeze forced that pestiferous joker, the immune from seasickness, entirely out of business. Speed was reduced to considerably below half normal, when it became known that the captain had decided to satisfy himself again as to the efficiency of his armament, and establish what a good many hours of work by the chief gunner's mate and his striker had accomplished. The tenseness of Captain Porterfield's earnest face had come back to it, and it was not difficult to see that he would not again countenance any undue ribaldry on the part of his trivially inclined watch officers in case the guns should fail again. This was precisely what they did, one after the other, and the captain's lips framed themselves into angry mutterings, the purport of which must of course be left to the imagination. One gun misfired on account of a defective firing-pin, in another the cartridge jammed, while the breech of the other one failed to close, and further examinations as to the causes were

ordered, firing attempts to be resumed on the following morning.

These renewed efforts, too, were unsatisfactory in the extreme. Rebellious No. 1 gun's firing-pin brought no discharge, while the other three, although barking with warlike ferocity, developed minor defects which had to be adjusted. Captain Porterfield spoke quite disrespectfully of government officials who would provide a vessel of the *Venetia's* importance with second-hand armament, and those who were nearest to him declared that his dark face paled as he applied sundry somewhat insulting remarks to his entire armament collectively, and strode forward.

Then from the crow's-nest in the foretop came the cry of the lookout in a shrill tenor:

"Lightship ahead, one point on the port bow, sir!"

And with the answering "Lightship ahead!" from the pilot-house the immunes hitherto referred to were again doomed to disappointment. During the heavy weather in the Caribbean, they had cheered the afflicted with further discouraging remarks to this effect:

"Call this dirty weather? Wait till we get off Hatteras day after to-morrow. If you're sick now, you'll pass right out then, because it ain't quiet in them waters once a month."

But there was Diamond Shoals lightship half a mile abeam, barely nodding in the sunshine, with not even a breath of wind to bring a flutter to her pennant, or cause a ripple on the surface of a sea that this time was literally as smooth as glass.

That night the *Venetia* was called on the radio for the first time at sea, and everyone's ears tingled with expectancy as a radio electrician carried the message-slip up to the captain. But when it was handed to the com-

munication officer whose duty it was to decipher it, it proved to be only a message changing orders and directing the *Venetia* to proceed to League Island Navy Yard instead of to Norfolk.

This change of destination was agreeable enough in its way, since Philadelphia is a much more attractive port to ask for leave in than Norfolk ever will be. But at the same time there was disappointment openly expressed because the radioed orders had not directed Captain Porterfield to hurry at once across the ocean. He, however, appeared to be very well satisfied, for, much as he loved the *Venetia* and believed her destined for a good record "somewhere over yonder," he welcomed a brief stay in an important navy yard, where his more or less undependable armament might be divested of all semblance of doubt as to whether or no it would be ready in an emergency. Then, too, his wife and children could come to him from their Annapolis home.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the 14th day of November, the Delaware River pilot came aboard, the *Venetia* made various courses up Delaware Bay and River, and at nine o'clock that night anchored opposite League Island Navy Yard, seven days from Colon and twenty-one from San Francisco. At 8:17 the next morning she was fast to her moorings at a navy yard dock; Captain Porterfield, in the fullest regalia permitted by the existing rules of war, visited the navy yard commandant; a considerable leave party went ashore, and a navy yard force came aboard to caulk the decks and make such other repairs as might be necessary, naturally not forgetting 3-inch guns numbered 1, 2, and 3.

The first few days at League Island were all bustle and excitement. There was every indication, to judge from

the elaborate preparations, that the Department of Construction and Repair was pleased with the *Venetia* and had determined to outfit her for the most strenuous and aggressive war service that would reasonably be expected of a vessel of her class. Her decks above and below swarmed with workmen, and experienced eyes saw to it that even the slightest defect should not be overlooked; days were spent upon the guns and their platforms until pronounced "sure to work next time"; the launching gears for the deadly depth charges were erected at the stern, and the magazines filled with ammunition. In the meantime Executive Officer Krebs's office was almost constantly besieged by officers and men asking for liberty ashore. This was gladly granted, for nothing so whets the morale of a ship's crew as the opportunity for relaxation on dry land, and there seemed small likelihood indeed ahead for further liberty for some time, once Philadelphia was left behind.

As a matter of course, now and then men were "ordered to the mast" and slight punishments meted out for overstaying leave or for that stimulated condition which is sometimes possible even in defiance of the stringent department laws designed to prevent it. The usual penalty exacted in such cases is the cutting off of pay for so many days, the punishment being made to fit the crime as far as possible, and it can be said that there is seldom found a recalcitrant mariner who would not select a brief sentence to the restful precincts of the "brig" rather than a cutting off of liberty and an official touch on his pocket. Captain Porterfield agreed with the executive officer that the more liberty the better was a good rule for keeping a crew good-natured; for, without good-nature encouraged into it by official lenity, it will sulk and perform the work assigned to it begrudgingly,

and, of course, ineffectively. As a matter of pleasant rumor, it was told that on one occasion, when the captain saw a jacky roll over the side and speak familiarly to the officer of the deck, he smiled visibly and remarked:

"I wouldn't mind having that myself."

There were sixteen days of constant activity aboard, before the taking on of fuel oil gave the welcome warning that the day was not far distant when the *Venetia* would prepare to put to sea. But on that welcome sixteenth day, the 2nd of December, this welcome operation began, and the next morning the captain came aboard from the office of the yard commandant with what were evidently sealed orders under his arm. Next, the Delaware pilot came aboard, moorings were cast off from the dock, and a course was made down what is no doubt the busiest river in all the world, excepting only the Thames (with even that in dispute, when American brag is pitted against British bluster).

At Delaware breakwater there were many expressions of keen disappointment when a course was made to the north'ard instead of east'ard across the Atlantic. There was of course some consolation in the reflection that most of the ship's company were Californians, had never been to New York, and were now to be afforded their first opportunity of visiting the Great White Way. But by this time all hands had been drilled into the more commendable notion that they were far from being on a comfortable yachting cruise, and moreover, what they had learned of the rudiments of war had created in their minds an impatient sort of longing to apply them to more intensive actualities. Naturally, there were many speculations as to the purpose of proceeding to New York instead of across the Atlantic to scenes of real action, and these were varied, and often small fancies

UNIFORM ON THE DELAWARE

LEAGUE ISLAND NAVY YARD

lured out of dreamland. It was not likely, the wiser ones thought, that the *Venetia* would be called upon to serve in the harbor defense of the great metropolis, because, no doubt, that had already been definitely arranged for. It was thought by some that perhaps she would be assigned to scout duty along the coast, which, while being interesting enough from a junketing point of view, was not exactly the kind of service that so many exemplars of youthful valor had enlisted for. But it was all speculation, for even those of the crew who were, through former civil associations, on speaking terms with some of the officers, could secure no further information than that the orders were to proceed to the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Here, too, everything was guesswork with reference to what future destinations or duties had been outlined during the nine days the *Venetia* remained there, and it was thought by the many who had chosen to regard her as being altogether an unusually important and meritorious craft that she was subjected to treatment not at all in keeping with her high caste and former brilliant career.

The yard was congested to a dangerous degree with war-vessels of all kinds, from the mighty dreadnought to the saucy little submarine chaser, and these were coming and going constantly. There was only a small percentage of sufficient dock space, it was true, but the *Venetia's* many lovers were unable to assign any satisfactory reason why, when once moored to a dock, she could not be permitted to lie there in comfort, instead of being shunted from one to another to make room for craft that, at least to them, were not half so important.

Such improvements as were necessary to secure absolute efficiency and put the *Venetia* into the very best of

fighting trim were made by the navy yard mechanics, and the liberty parties that went ashore to view the sights of the Great White Way were numerous and in constant motion. Strange to say, the *Venetia's* boys were very good boys, and it was not often that "A. O. L." (absent over leave) was registered against them. But there was one of the mess attendants, a not over-alert Filipino boy, who was never granted leave but he overstayed it. All he would ever say, when asked to state an excuse for it, was:

"I don't know, sir—got a bad memory, sir—I forget." And later on, in Gibraltar, he was granted liberty ashore and forgot to come back.

# CHAPTER IX

## A MENIAL ASSIGNMENT

DELAY AT PHILADELPHIA—CAPTAIN LA ROCHE—"VENETIA" IS MADE A TOWBOAT!—TO NEW YORK AND BACK.

ONE day much comment and speculation was interchanged among those whom indifferent rank compelled to venture guesses as to the significance of new incidents aboard, by the arrival of a distinctly foreign officer. This was Commander La Roche of the French Navy—"plastered all over with brass," as a disrespectful seaman expressed it—who came aboard, bag and baggage; and, with the hospitable instincts of the true Southern gentleman, Captain Porterfield surrendered part of his quarters to him. It was believed that this new addition to the ship's company must be indeed an important one, or else he would not have been received with so much polite ceremony by Captain Porterfield, and regarded by the younger officers with admiring respect.

There could be no doubt—as the more inquisitive minds argued the innovation—that he must be a naval officer of much importance, and with a record perhaps only second to a George Dewey. Doubtless he had been sent aboard to give final instructions as to the most recently developed methods of biting the biters in the

destruction of enemy submarines, or how to point the anti-aircraft gun so that a shot at an airplane must result in a clean hit every time. Some exceedingly bad French on the part of one of the junior officers, who had a notion that he knew something about it, placed him at once at ease, but the volleys of replies, so rapidly delivered, quite confused the self-appointed interpreter into blushing silence. Then Commander La Roche continued the conversation in English that was not half so execrable as the American's French, and eventually there was at least a partially successful quest for information in progress.

Finally, like a hand grenade suddenly thrown into a crowded life-boat, came a most disheartening announcement, the awful significance of which even a confusing cloud of accent could not conceal:

"Mais, oui. I am een command of one flitt of submarine chasair, and I delight for say zat zees beautiful corvette de guerre has been appoint for asseest in make one tow for Gibraltare."

The depressing secret was out at last! The words traveled about the ship with the unerring certainty of a radiogram. Instead of being ordered at once to inspiring zones of naval glory, *Venetia* was to be made a towboat! She would become one of those scarcely moving instruments of indolent activity and servile patience—a tug! And worst of all, it had been designed by an inconsiderate department that she was to act in this menial capacity for American submarine chasers manned, not by American mariners, but by foreigners who had but small knowledge of how to handle them and knew not a single word of English.

The French crews had been for days and days practising on these trim little 110-footers with more or less

ludicrous results. The steering was uncertain and, two or three times, they had come into collision with docks, buoys and vessels large enough, one of the wags said, for a blind man to miss. Then, when some of them stood out into East River from the navy yard basin and down the bay, as the *Venetia* cast off her moorings to the dock and followed in their wake to the anchorage at Tompkinsville, the very throb of her engines seemed to maintain a doleful harmony with the ever-repeated refrain:

"The thirteenth of December! The *Venetia* a tug! The thirteenth of December! The *Venetia* a tug!"

Ill luck followed to Tompkinsville anchorage, for the Californians were given a reception almost unknown on "The Coast," in the shape of a heavy squall and thunder-shower, followed by snow and sleet, which lasted throughout the night.

The squall had spent itself by the next morning, and the *Venetia* made a course to Philadelphia, for some reason as yet unexplained; in the company of the submarine chasers, looking for all the world like a painted Jezebel of the web-footed class, trying to guide into something like precision a family of uncertain ducklings.

This time the course up Delaware Bay was an experience of sore discomfort to those officers and enlisted men who hailed from the balmy Southland. The northerly wind was biting cold, and the bay was full of floating ice, the volume of which increased on the way up the river, and a tug was put to work breaking it away so that the *Venetia* could reach her dock at League Island Navy Yard.

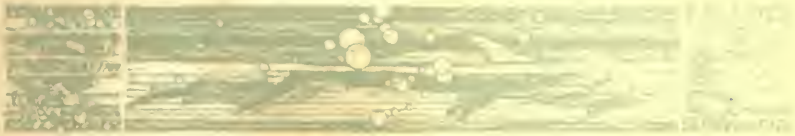
Contemplation of the duty ahead of them was not of a nature calculated to inspire any renewed naval ardor in the youthful souls aboard, and in addition to this in-

fringement upon their self-accorded rights as duly enlisted fighters of the sea, the weather was surcharged with freezing bitterness. This distressing temperature would have been quite sufficient to *frapper*, more or less, the ardor of so many youths from the glorious climate of California; but it had become noised about that someone who ought to be "in the know" had named the squadron of which the *Venetia* had so unwillingly become a part "The Suicide Fleet," because in the opinion of many old man-o'-warsmen it never could possibly reach its destination. This was not calculated to bring renewed courage to the souls of the tenderfeet, but, silently wrapping themselves closer in mufflers and helmets knitted by tender hands, and recalling the definition of war ascribed by history to General Sherman, they went about the duties assigned them smilingly and without a white feather sprouting from the heart of any of them.

Aside from routine duties, the stay of five days at League Island was devoid of incident, except for the execution of acceptance and administering of the oath of office as provisional ensign, U. S. N. R. F., to Boatswain John Alexander, a most popular promotion with everyone from mess-room to forecastle, for all felt sure that he would prove as capable in the stripe and star of an ensign as he had been in the less "ratey" crossed anchors of the warrant officer.

THROUGH WINTRY SEAS

TO ICY BROOKLYN



# CHAPTER X

## CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

TOWING SUBMARINE CHASERS—DULL STAY AT BERMUDA—DEMERIT WINNERS—NEW YEAR'S EVE

ON the twenty-first of December, after a night of dense fog, the fleet of converted yachts and government tugs, each with a submarine chaser in tow, left League Island and proceeded slowly down the river to Delaware breakwater. Here all came to anchor in the well designed harbor of refuge there, as darkness almost impenetrable was on the face of the waters, with indications of the approach of heavy weather. These sturdy little chasers of the 110-foot class, entrusted to the *Venetia's* keeping for safe delivery in foreign waters, had been built for use in our own navy. But, catching the fancy of the French, who sadly needed boats of that type, these five were placed under the French flag, crews sent from France to man them, and on account of their small cruising radius, vessels were provided to tow them, while on the way to more congenial activities.

The towing squadron consisted of the *Venetia*, the converted yacht *Lydonia*, and navy tugs *Barnegat*, *Gypsum Queen*, and *Montauk*. It must be confessed that the two craft created for pleasure did not seem to go

about that somewhat humiliating service with half the aplomb manifested by the three business vessels intended only for that service except in time of war.

Early on the morning of the twenty-second, the indications of heavy weather having disappeared, the squadron got under way and proceeded to sea, with Bermuda as its first destination, for some reason not then communicated to the general company. Late that afternoon the fact became apparent that, unless provided with the unusual power of such yachts as the *Venetia*, intended for deep-sea cruises, this class of vessel should not have been assigned to the somewhat perilous duty of towing. The *Lydonia* promptly began to fall behind, the *Venetia's* speed was ordered reduced to enable her to act as consort for her sister yacht in case of trouble, and this came on the following morning, when the *Lydonia* stopped, reporting serious trouble with her boilers, and the *Venetia* became the dispatch boat, fussing about from one tow to another, to spread the somewhat alarming news. After discussion between the captains, it was decided that the *Lydonia* should be sent in tow of the *Montauk* to Hampton Roads for repairs, while the remainder of the squadron proceeded on its way. Two of the tugs were now towing two chasers each, with the *Venetia* proudly, if not altogether jauntily, leading the formation.

Christmas morning broke bright and beautiful, with a gently heaving sea, and a sky luminous with painted clouds of gorgeous beauty. But to those hearts that were heavy away from their homes on that day—and hearts without that heaviness are not true ones—there was small appreciation of any Christmas morning, however beautiful, on the bosom of the ocean, in comparison with what might have been away over there by lonesome

firesides beyond the western horizon. Moreover, it is seriously related by one of the officers that a fair-sized deputation waited upon the paymaster to voice the decision of a considerable portion of the crew, to the effect that Christmas dinner should be postponed to some future date while in port, since many of the boys had not yet succeeded in effecting any sort of analogy between gastronomy and navigation.

Little progress was made on this day, and there was plenty of time for musings of this nature, broken by the discovery that the *Barnegat* and her tow were nowhere in sight, and the ever-willing, ever-speedy *Venetia* must set out in search of her.

The tug and her tow were found after careful sleuthing on many courses. It developed that she too was having boiler trouble, and would not be ready to proceed on her course for several hours. The *Venetia* hastened to convey this somewhat dispiriting intelligence to her squadron sisters, and barely sufficient speed to ensure steerageway was ordered until the *Barnegat* should have completed her repairs, which completion was not signaled until late in the afternoon. It should not be in the province of a craft so dignified and ladylike as the *Venetia* had ever been to descend to braggadocio. It is only fair to say, however, that mishaps of this nature were frequent on the long and tortuous way across, and that she never had more than one or two of any kind during her entire career in the service, nor was one dollar expended for repairs, beyond those unavoidable ones that are inseparable from such strenuous and varied experiences as fell to her lot.

After the many tortuous courses on all points of the compass in search of the lame sister, *Barnegat*, and her tow, the evening seemed vastly more like Christmas.

Naturally enough, the officers in the wardroom, under the watchful supervision of an efficient captain of the mess, saw to it that they had as good a Christmas dinner as the somewhat limited larder could be expected to afford, and there was, of course, a corresponding increase in the mess bill for December. But an excellent dinner was provided for the petty officers and crew as well, and, aside from the unmistakable presence of homesickness, reflected in the eyes of some of the boys who were absent from Yuletide firesides for the first time, it was a merry one.

There were some interchanges of gifts, chosen from personal belongings instead of from the counters of stores, but they were all the more valuable for that. The purchase of a keepsake for a friend is after all a perfunctory sort of evidence of good-feeling that is forgotten as soon as the gift has lost its usefulness. But one's self-deprivation of some possession of personal value to give to another is a manifestation of sincere friendship which neither the recipient nor the donor ever forgets. Then too there were many exchanges of the less-needed articles for those that were needed more, and the presence of the Christmas spirit in the transfer gave it the value of a veritable gift.

After dinner those who had musical instruments or the gift of song made use of them to the great edification of those to whom such talents had been denied, and it was the consensus of opinion among the crew—to judge from such noises as filtered through the passages from the wardroom—that there was a much merrier Christmas party between-decks, and some of it was excellent enough to dispel the few cloudy reminders of the folks at home.

Just before sunset on December 27th, Bermuda was

SUBMARINE CHASER NO. 67

OFF WATCH

sighted. But the *Barnegat* and the *Gypsum Queen* signaled that their tow-lines had parted and their chasers gone adrift in the brisk breezes that almost invariably blow across England's "Western Watering Paradise," so this necessitated dropping anchor in St. George's Channel until the following morning. Maneuvering to retrieve the drifting chasers was still in progress at sunrise, but before noon the entire squadron was safely at anchor in Great Sound, and the several commanding officers were exchanging visits with those of U. S. S. *Concord*, U. S. S. *Penobscot*, U. S. S. *Prometheus* (repair ship), *Choctaw* (fuel ship), U. S. S. *Nahant*, and U. S. S. *Nokomis*. All of these seemed to be waiting there either to furnish such supplies as the squadron lacked or to regale it with later news from the seat of war than had been picked up by its none-too-long-reaching radio apparatus during the week since leaving Delaware breakwater. Little more was heard, however, than the *Venetia's* wireless had "picked up," which was another feather in her already gaily decorated cap of official record.

The stay in this perfectly lying and delightfully balmy harbor, where there is eternal breezy summer with seldom summer's torrid heat, was an agreeable change from the freezing atmosphere of New York and Philadelphia. Its climate was likened, with widely variant degrees of comparison, to that of every district in the California Southland, all the way from San Diego to San Luis Obispo, according to the hailing town of the speakers. Then too, several loyal hearts from "north of the Tehachapi" declared in turn that it was for all the world like that of Monterey, San Francisco, Oakland, or San Rafael, and even Benicia and Oroville were included. When it was argued, however, that during

nearly all of the stay in Great Sound the wind had been blowing to an extent that would make San Francisco Bay at its worst appear like a region eternally of balmy zephyrs, the consensus of opinion was largely to the credit of the glorious climate of California's "greatest harbor in the world."

"Liberty" parties were frequent and the deportment of the boys *almost* above reproach. The qualifying word is employed for the reason that there were a certain number to whom deeds calling for something more than reproach were second natures. This class was more or less made up from the temperamental demerit winners in college courses, who had not yet learned that, while mischief is an indispensable characteristic of the frivolous in a college town, it cannot be tolerated by the stringent disciplinary rules of the navy.

When New Year's Eve arrived, however, although the skipper had given no intimation that these rules would be in any way relaxed on America's freest and breeziest holiday, there seemed to be a disposition on the part of "the man who was looking" to glance in the other direction when minor infractions of routine were committed. At all events many lights below were not extinguished at taps, and there were numerous interchanges of the compliments of the season, in dimly lighted groups, when the birth of a new year was announced at eight bells.

Ashore, however, that midnight hour was distinctly un-American and marked by pure British stolidity and unconcern. There were no such outpourings of merriment and good-feeling as many of the boys had been accustomed to at Techau's, Tait's, the St. Francis Hotel, the Palace, or any of the hotels at Los Angeles or San Diego. If, after midnight, a man chanced to meet

an acquaintance, there was a more or less emphatic "Happy New Year, old boy," and that was about all.

It was true that on the following day there were some official interchanges of courtesy, but they were not American ones, and the forecastle jack was not supposed to form a part of them, but had to shift for himself at his own expense. An invitation had come from the Governor-General of Bermuda to a reception at the official mansion, and Captain Porterfield detailed Surgeon Drake and Ensign Howard to be his personal aides for that occasion. It is to be presumed that this reception must have been quite formal in character, for the only information at hand to assist the chronicler is to the effect that "the governor-general is a splendid specimen of the official Britisher, tall, affable, the acme of military bearing," and that his mansion is "spacious, solidly old-fashioned, and situated in the center of a wonderful park and glorious gardens."

It is pleasing to be able to add that a dinner and "party" in the evening on board of H. M. S. *Leviathan* was more in conformity with the American notions for the proper celebration of New Year's night. Moreover, be it said too that it was not at all observant of the rules promulgated by the Honorable Josephus Daniels touching upon the nature of the liquid substances that should enter into the menus of functions of that sort. No further information has been furnished with reference to this *Leviathan* party, other than that those who were present had a good time and the British are "jolly good fellows."

# CHAPTER XI

## AMERICAN HUMOR

CAPTAIN LA ROCHE AND THE LILY FARMER—A CONFLICT OF AUTHORITY —ALMOST A TRAGEDY.

HAT keen sense of humor so predominant a characteristic in American youth is ever a wholesome irritant to the monotony and humdrum of life aboard ship, especially to those not thoroughly weaned to it early in their nautical careers. There were several of these ebullient young scamps aboard of the *Venetia*, ever ready for the humorous prod or jest at the expense of someone else. One of them, in the absence of some fact to edit into a quip of this nature, did not hesitate to draw upon his imagination for a flight of fiction that would apply to some person in his immediate neighborhood, and a case in point is pleasantly remembered:

Commander La Roche (known as "the star boarder of the officers' mess") was one day leaning over the rail waiting to be taken for a jaunt ashore, when the young fictionist in question edged up to him in the company of a shipmate. The polite little Frenchman smiled pleasantly and asked:

"You have been before in Bermuda?"

"Oh, yes," was the reply; "I have a ranch there."

CONTRAST THIS WITH—

WINTER MEMORIES—

IN PHILADELPHIA

"How—how moch large—how beeg ze ranch?"

"Oh, I dunno, four or five thousand acres or so, I guess."

"Ah! Zat ranch is one beeg estate. Vere shall I find it ven I go to de shore?"

"Oh, somewheres on the island of Bermuda."

"But—" and the French excitability began to assert itself—"Bermuda ees one group of island!"

There was a laugh at the expense of the romancer, following the commander's exhibition of superior geographical knowledge, but the retort was ready as usual:

"I know that, but you see the ranch is so big that it has to spread over three or four of them. I'm telling the world, commander, that that's *some* ranch!"

"C'est vraiment, mon ami! And w'at you make for grow on ze *some* ranch?"

"Nothing but Easter lilies."

"For why it is Eastair lilee? Four t'ousand acaire wiz noting but lilee?"

"That's all. You see there are a hundred million people in the United States, and it's against the law for one of them to be without a bunch of lilies on Easter Sunday."

The dark eye of the commander began to snap incredulously, and many necks craned forward to note the finish of this amazing bit of romancing. Evidently, however, the imaginative ranchman had prepared one, for he went on:

"I did pretty well before the war when transportation was good, but this year I don't believe I'll be able to get more than thirty or forty million bunches over to save my life."

By this time the commander had become wise to the deception, so, stiffening to the full height of his not very

imposing figure, he said, with sorely offended dignity, as he walked away:

"I do not know weech eet ees de most beeg fool. Myself for listen, or you for make de lie!"

The laugh was now distinctly on the romancer, and it was repeated many times, as the power-dory was announced at the gangway and the commander stepped into it to be taken ashore. The strong northerly wind blowing at the time had disturbed the waters of the harbor into choppy seas and the little boat heaved and tossed about with no regard whatever for the theories of safety first. The little commander excitedly called attention to the fact that there were "moch too many people in ze boat," and, no doubt, inspired by the notion that he was the ranking officer aboard, immediately assumed command. Then rising to his feet, wobbling very painfully, he shouted with true Gallic gesticulation:

"Prenez garde, or we shall capsize! To ze right—to ze right!"

The boatswain's mate in charge obeyed the command and the little craft heaved and labored more dangerously than ever. The commander made a characteristic gesture in rebuke for his error and changed the order:

"To ze left—to ze left! Ahead eet ees one rock! Sacre bleu! to ze left!"

Before the counter-tenor tones of the last command had died away the dory struck and capsized, leaving her passengers and crew floundering about in the choppy waves. Ensign Nicolini swam to the rock, "Pay" Schnetzler followed, between them the boat was righted, and the shipwrecked mariners clung to it until they were rescued by the whale-boat dispatched from the *Venetia*. As the salvaged ones filed up the gangway and away to their respective quarters, the French commander

brushed past the lily farmer with an air of completely dissolved dignity and said:

"I weesh I have remain to learn more of ze Eastair lilee!"

A few days later one of the submarine chasers came alongside and Commander La Roche, with his orderly, was taken aboard for transfer to the converted yacht *Nokomis*. Not only had it been decided that he would be more comfortable there for the remainder of the voyage across, but the *Venetia* expected new officers, and her staterooms were already occupied beyond the limits of what might be called the true comforts of home.

If volubly expressed regrets, punctuated by appropriate gestures, were any indication of the true inwardness of Commander La Roche's sincerity, then he was very sorry indeed to take his leave so abruptly. As he moved toward the gangway waving an adieu, the lily farmer assisted him with his numerous impedimenta, and received the following good-natured prod:

"Ah, merci beaucoup! And w'en la guerre ees feenesh, send me one cargo Eastair lilee, for introduce ze habite to France."

# CHAPTER XII

## IN THE "ROARING FORTIES"

TRANSFER OF OFFICERS—AGAIN UNDER WAY—BERMUDAN SCENERY CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF CALIFORNIA.

ON the fourth of January it became known that on the sixth the towing squadron, now materially increased by the addition of ships that had been waiting for it at Bermuda, would get under way in battle formation, with every war precaution observed to the letter. On the same day two important changes in the personnel of wardroom officers were announced. The executive officer and navigator, W. G. Krebs, was detached and transferred to the *Prometheus*, under orders to proceed to the United States, being replaced as executive officer by Lieutenant (J. G.) John B. Armstrong, while Ensign Donald MacKenzie, N. N. V., reported on board as navigator, having been transferred from U. S. S. *Prometheus*, and Lieutenant Mark A. Mangan was detached from the transport *Buford* and assigned to the *Venetia* as watch officer.

Captain Porterfield again sighed with that concern which is obviously unavoidable when a real naval man is compelled to accept for so important a station as navigator one whose sea experience has been limited if not

PLOWING ANGRY SEAS

DEPTH CHARGES AND GUNS FROM ALOFT

altogether negligible. Ensign MacKenzie, he thought, must surely be mentally equipped for all the technical requirements of navigation. In less than nine years (1905-1914) he had come from his home in Weatherford, Texas, entered the Johns Hopkins University, at Baltimore, earned the degrees of A. B., M. A., Ph.D., and had become assistant professor of astronomy, at the same time serving in the Maryland Naval Militia. On America's entry into the war, his battalion was mobilized on the battleship *Missouri*, from which he was assigned to the *Prometheus* and later to the *Venetia*. The application of his superior knowledge, however, was disappointing, for he proved to be temperamentally unfitted for the practical side of navigation, as afterwards developed when he became subjected to the real physical rigors of it.

Lieutenant Mangan was born at Shelby, Ohio, July 11, 1884, and in March, 1916, foreseeing that Uncle Sam's entry into the war was almost certain, enlisted in the 2nd Ohio Battalion, N. N. V., soon became an ensign, and, in April, 1917, was commissioned lieutenant (J. G.) and assigned to the battleship *Vermont*, strangely enough on the very day that a state of war was declared between the United States and Germany. In September of that year, he was detached from the *Vermont* and assigned to the converted yacht *Helenita* (formerly belonging to Mr. Frank Gould), which was then fitting out at a New York shipyard for duty similar to that expected of, and satisfactorily fulfilled by, the *Venetia*. She was in our gallant ship's company in the famous "Suicide Squadron," but nearly foundered on the voyage to Bermuda; was declared unfit for service and ordered home to be placed out of commission. Lieutenant Mangan was temporarily assigned to the U. S.

transport *Buford* as assistant navigating officer and commander of the armed guard, and in January, 1918, was detached and detailed to the *Venetia* vice Lieutenant Krebs, ordered home. He remained with that vessel during all of her exciting adventures in the Mediterranean and until she was placed out of commission. He was then, on his personal request, ordered home and released from active service.

The departure of Lieutenant Krebs occasioned much sincere regret on the part of those who knew him best, for he was a man of many attainments that made him a valuable asset in relieving the monotonies of the ward-room during off-watch hours. Well read beyond the ordinary run of seafaring men, he could furnish entertainment by the hour, and, be it understood, mental relaxation of that kind is always a welcome dissipator of those boresome hours that are always inseparable from long runs at sea.

As persistent rumor had placed German submarines in those waters, following depredations in the North Atlantic, it was decided that the towing squadron was now operating in a zone of positive danger and extraordinary measures were taken to be ready for immediate action in case of attack. Ammunition was placed within easy reach of Numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4, Captain Porterfield having finally become satisfied that they would be "sure fire" in response to the next order for it. Added "ash-cans," as the American jacky has nicknamed those murderous implements of destruction officially known as depth charges, were brought aboard from the supply ship, and exhaustive "general quarters" drills were in progress almost continuously.

It was not until the morning of the seventh of January that the considerably increased squadron weighed

LIEUT. MARK A. MANGAN

anchor and made a course on the long stretch between Bermuda and the Azores.

The stay in Bermuda had not been so pleasant as had been expected by all hands, in view of its far-famed and extensively advertised reputation for cordial hospitality, salubrity of climate, and the poetical beauty of its scenery. The Bermudans, aside from the official set, who were not Bermudans, were not so cordial as might have been expected of our British cousins, especially in war time, and one of the officers has said that his experience in respect to this relationship caused him to feel that it ought to be relatively classed as cousinship "just about ten times removed."

As to climatic salubrity, attention has already been called to the half-gale blowing all of the time the squadron lay there, making the landing of shore parties exceedingly dangerous at times. As to scenic splendors, Californians on board variously criticized it as not being at all in it with those of Sausalito or Belvedere, not half so gorgeous as Carmel Bay, and San Diego had it backed off the map altogether. At all events, this same officer states that the prevailing impression of Bermuda on leaving it was expressed in the trite but appropriate phrase: "No more Bermuda in mine."

The towing squadron left Great Sound in the following divisions, the vessels proceeding in the order named, each with one submarine chaser in tow, while one of them was compelled to be responsible for two:

The *Venetia*, *Nokomis*, and *Castine*; then an interval of one thousand yards; the *Penobscot*, *Nahant*, and *Concord*; an interval of five hundred yards, with the *Barnegat* and *Gypsum Queen* following. Heavy weather, with rapidly dropping barometers indicating worse ahead, was encountered immediately on leaving Bermuda, but

this caused no interruption in the preparations for action should it become necessary. Gun crews were kept at drills at regular intervals; boat's crews were further perfected in the important duty of abandoning ship without confusion; and every vessel was darkened throughout the night, excepting for brief intervals of from ten to fifteen minutes in each half-hour. These intervals were necessary in order that the divisions might not become lost in the darkness and driven out of sight of each other.

The next morning dawned in a gale which at times was so fierce as to indicate a wind velocity of one hundred miles an hour, but the sturdy *Venetia* faced it gallantly and rode the now truly mountainous waves as though it were mere child's play for her. As a matter of fact, after careful inspection of the other vessels through his strong binoculars, Captain Porterfield expressed himself as being now more than ever satisfied with the little ship for whose command he had applied. She not only had proved herself a more than capable sea boat, but she carried her heavy tow-line even better than some of the vessels built for that service and with more regular speed.

Here a brief description of these deep-sea tow-lines might not be out of place, for the reason that they bear but slight relation to those employed in the smooth waters of harbors. The great cables are generally one hundred twenty to one hundred thirty fathoms in length, of eight-inch hemp, and "bent" onto V-shaped bridles which are fashioned from the same cable and moored both to the towing vessel and the one in tow. In the center of the tow-line are wound from thirty-five to forty fathoms of heavy chain, weighing many tons, so that the cable may not lash about in a seaway, ham-

pering the progress of tower and towed, or else causing the line itself to part. Several tow-lines parted, however, during this angry storm of many days' duration, sometimes with disastrous results, as will be detailed later on. Truly enough, this storm was "something fierce," as many a nervous mariner expressed himself whenever the *Venetia* plunged her bows deep into the seething troughs between the huge waves, then rose with every beam and trunnion creaking beneath the weight of the seas on her forecastle deck, that spread great volumes of blue water and spray from stem to stern. In comparison with this one, the gale off the Gulf of Tehuantepec, which had so distressed the tenderfeet to the great edification of the old salts, was as the likening of a wild mountain thunder-storm to the placid surface of Spreckels Lake in Golden Gate Park on a warm day in May.

Sometimes one of these giant waves would break over the stern and dash forward, occasioning greater concern, for that was not the proper place to take water aboard. Then, too, it was seldom that one of them broke over the stern or quarter and swept forward but that it left some kind of havoc in its path, to say nothing of bringing danger to the bridle of the tow-line. One of these waves wrenched away the heavy covering of the after steering-engine as if it had been the receptacle of a gift of roses to a sweetheart, and swept it across decks and out to sea. It must be repaired immediately or the steering-engine would be put out of business, so life-lines were fastened about the waists of the carpenters, lest they be washed overboard beyond hope of rescue, during the heart-breaking labor of constructing a temporary covering.

# CHAPTER XIII

## WAVES MOUNTAIN HIGH

STAUNCHNESS OF THE "VENETIA"—HUMORS OF THE GALE—TROUBLE WITH THE CHASERS.

THE ceaseless anger of the titanic waves naturally excited no little anxiety and alarm among the many young landsmen aboard, whose only experience had been gained in the balmy quiet of the training station at San Pedro, for they were now getting their first experience of active service on the treacherous and merciless deep. One day the skipper remarked:

"Well, you've seen 'em all now. That's about as high as they get."

Everyone on board was delighted to receive this encouraging information, for to quote from a conversation with Ensign Howard, in stating his first hurricane experience: "The seas were tall enough," he said, "to have sprinkled the summit of Telegraph Hill. So tremendous were they that there were seas within seas—if you can picture that—then smaller ones on top of these. There were no whitecaps, for the surface of the ocean was lashed into one vast sheet of white foam, which the wind would blow into a wet mist or vapor that scurried over the surface like a low fog.

"During the entire seventeen days from Bermuda to the Azores there was never a moment when we didn't have to hold onto or brace ourselves against something or other. There were times when the ship rolled so heavily as to cause many of us to wonder whether she would ever come back, for the ship was rolling on an average of from forty to fifty degrees, at which angle she always dipped up a whole deckful of water. Happily, however, she always did come back, for the water would run like torrents out of the freeing ports and across the deck aft as she rolled over on the opposite beam-end."

The *Venetia* has been described as being an almost perfect sea boat in angry weather, with a long, easy roll that has no "throw" in it, and so, after several days of experience, nearly every one of her gallant company felt reasonably certain that she would justify her reputation and reach her next port unscathed.

As described by Ensign Howard, it was only the keen American sense of humor that on many occasions twisted moments of terror into excitants of genuine laughter, and this disposition to joke under any or all circumstances obtained not only in the wardroom but in the truly enough cheerless crew's quarters as well.

"It was always a joke," said this breezy young officer, "when one of us would receive the contents of a plate of soup or a dish of beans in his lap, and there were always shouts of delight when all of the dishes left their racks and sped, bumping the bumps, across the table to the floor. The piano and paymaster's safe were made fast to the bulkheads on either side of the wardroom, and we often made pools on which of them would carry away first, and who would be in the pinch when it broke from its moorings and crashed into our magnificent mahogany table.

"It was also a common occurrence for the wardroom steward to struggle through the doorway and announce: 'Dinner he spill on de deck, sir. Him slide off de galley range, sir,' and then, of course, it would mean 'canned Bill' [cold corned beef] for the hungry mess that night."

There was not a yacht or a tugboat that made the trip but she lost her tow at least once, and some many times. On such occasions much hilarious amusement was gotten out of the excitable temperaments of the French crews of whatever chaser happened to be in trouble. Once, in getting into a position from which a line could be floated to one of them, the *Venetia* miscalculated her distance and collided gently with the chaser's stern. Immediately there were excited cries above the roar of the waves, accompanied by gesticulations with arms, legs, and shoulders that were not in the slightest degree what might have been expected from hardy mariners. Lieutenant Le Breton, the commanding officer of one of the chasers, who had smashed two of his fingers and had come aboard the *Venetia* for medical treatment, witnessed this occurrence with every manifestation of true Gallic excitement, and cried out, "*Stupide! Stupide!*" But whether he meant the chaser or the *Venetia* was never satisfactorily determined.

There were also misgivings and some discomfort when the fleet commander would order all vessels to practise zigzagging. This tortuous altering of the course of a vessel from thirty to forty degrees right to an angle of the same number of degrees left, with changes every few minutes, is difficult enough in a moderately ruffled sea, with a heavy tow-line stretching more than a hundred fathoms astern; but it is doubly wearing and dangerous in nasty weather, as each of the crews now discovered

to its great cost of strength and loss of sleep. Nevertheless, everyone aboard was hungry for real war, and since such endless hard work as this seemed part of the process of blazing a trail to it, no one complained.

During the height of this storm in the "Roaring Forties" there was scarcely one of its many days that was not marked by some kind of a mishap to one or more of the vessels. On the fourth day out from Bermuda, during the morning watch, one of the submarine chasers suddenly appeared off the port bow, laboring heavily under her own power, and signaled that her tow-line had parted and she "could not find mother." At that time it was not possible to pass a line aboard the "wayward child," but soon thereafter two of the "mothers" were made out with their "babies" adrift, and a third wirelessed that her line, too, had parted, and called for assistance. During the day there was little change in the details of this distressing misadventure, and the *Venetia* was ordered by wireless to stand by, ready to render assistance to her troubled or disabled sisters until the long watches of the black night had passed.

In the early morning the navy tug *Barnegat* came alongside and asked for a new tow-line to replace that lost by the flagship *Nokomis*, leaving her tow to take care of itself under its own power. After much maneuvering, and, be it regretfully confessed, considerable bad language, the line was gotten aboard of the *Barnegat* and off she plunged on her errand of greatly needed succor. Then it was noticed that the *Barnegat's* tow was also "sloshing about" helplessly, owing to engine trouble, and she began wigwagging for assistance. The *Venetia* veered about toward her, threw her a tow-line, and then labored on with two submarine chasers in tow, while in

the circumstances one was more than she could accommodate with any great degree of comfort or security.

As a matter of record, it may be stated here that these submarine chasers were almost continually in trouble while under their own power, and frequently while under tow. The French engineers, who were unaccustomed to the American motors, which materially differed from their own, never seemed to learn how to work them properly, and moreover, they certainly burned much more fuel than was at all necessary, and were continually calling for a fresh supply. At all events, they were a continual source of official concern aboard of the towing vessels, irrespective of what their other qualifications may have been.

To return to the towing squadrons, twenty-four hours of hard work was necessary in assembling the various "mothers" and their "children," and after a tempestuous night during which lights were shown for fifteen minutes every hour, it was discovered, of course to the dismay of the fleet commander, that all of the vessels were again separated. No single one reported any other in sight, so there was nothing left for each of them but to proceed "on its own," and make the best course it could toward its destination, now quite as far ahead as Bermuda was astern.

*From a Painting by W. A. Coulter*

IN THE "ROARING FORTIES"

# CHAPTER XIV

## TRULY A "SUICIDE FLEET"

THE STORM INCREASES—DEPTH CHARGES AWASH—"VENETIA'S" DANGEROUS DUTY—THE SQUADRON SEPARATED.

AS the days wore on one by one, other tows hove in sight, nearly all of them reporting mishaps of varying degrees of gravity, only to disappear again, and once more it became apparent that, owing to the continued heavy weather, it was utterly impossible to preserve formation of any kind.

At times when the *Venetia* demanded unusually united service from her crew, there was unmistakable evidence present that a large part of it, to say nothing of some of her officers, were prostrated by seasickness, which seemed to add to this distressing handicap with the tolling of each terrifying half-hour. This was especially noticeable on one occasion when several of the depth charges were washed out of their racks and "sloshed about" in the waves flooding the quarter, in imminent danger of exploding at any moment and sending all hands to the bottom. It required no small effort, and no mistake, to rescue and lash them down again short-handed, but the effort was made successfully, and everyone heaved a sigh of relief, excepting only those

unfortunates who had no sighs left to heave and were indifferent even to the danger of depth charges.

It is worthy of note here that a few months later there came a general laugh in petty officers' quarters and forecastle when it was learned that a medal of honor had been awarded a "bo's'n's mate" of another ship for having salvaged dislodged depth charges. This had occurred several times on the *Venetia's* after deck, and was regarded as being merely an exciting episode in the ordinary line of duty, for which honorable mention or a distinguished service medal was not expected.

Before daybreak on the following morning there came a wail of distress from submarine chaser No. 67, to the effect that her tow-line had parted and she was adrift. The tow-line was hauled aboard and repaired, but when the heaving sea was illuminated by as much sunshine as could very well percolate through the gauze of mingled haze and mist, she was nowhere to be seen. All through that day the *Venetia* steamed on various courses in search of her "truant child," but to no purpose. Then there arose, one after another, misgivings as to her probable fate, for, ever since leaving Bermuda, there had been a growing doubt as to the entire efficiency of the Frenchmen in manning American chasers. One of the Naval Reserve crew—it was the lily farmer, by the way—ventured the remark:

"Believe me, and I'm telling all the world, those Frenchmen are merry hell ashore, but altogether another kind of hell afloat."

Just before sunset No. 67 was made out, following close astern of the *Penobscot*, apparently doing very well under her own power. The sea was still too rough to admit of the passing of a tow-line to her, so the signal flags JA (follow in my wake) were hoisted, in the hope

that by daylight the sea would have moderated sufficiently to render possible an effort to annex her again to the tow-line. But for some unaccountable reason or other, except that her quartermaster could not have been looking, she failed to answer the signal, and nightfall was on to shut her again from view.

The morning dawned with nothing to break the stormy solitude except the occasional glimpse of a wreath of smoke on the horizon, and then a dense fog left the *Venetia* a solitary, struggling bark in the midst of an angry sea.

It was the thirteenth of January, and the predictions of the superstitious to the effect that the truant would never be found on that day were fully verified. Moreover, that night, in addition to her own troubles, which in all conscience were sore enough, the *Venetia* was ordered by radio to search for submarine chaser No. 68, which someone had lost and nobody could seem to find. Accordingly, lookouts were posted in each masthead, and all night long searchlights swept the spray-encumbered horizon, with no further effect than that an occasional light was made out in the dim distance, only to disappear again, and some forecastle wag with a baritone voice broke the silence with:

"Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to shine and die!"

The next night, after another day of tempestuous and ineffectual search, the *Galatea* and *Nokomis* were made out, the former with No. 67 in tow. Then came the signal that, for some unaccountable reason—no doubt a French one of some kind—she had cast off her mooring lines and was making for the *Venetia*. This she did with such unexpected celerity that she suddenly appeared from out of the darkness dead ahead; and while an attempt

was being made to stream a line attached to a life-buoy aboard of her, so that with it she might haul the tow-line aboard, she struck the *Venetia* a heavy blow square against the port side, just forward of the bridge.

Investigation developed that no material damage had resulted from this "sudden thrust out of the dark of night," so the *Venetia* stood by until morning, when No. 67 finally picked up the tow-line, and full speed ahead was ordered, so that lost time might be made up. Scarcely an hour had elapsed, however, before No. 67 signaled that her steering gear had broken down and speed was reduced to mere steerage way. No sooner had that been repaired than there came the signal that her towing-bridle needed repairs, and the lily farmer remarked:

"What I said about the Frenchmen at sea goes double now!"

Twice during the next twenty-four hours the unfortunate bridle parted, and as many times the unavoidable delays in splicing it and getting under way again inspired even that part of the ship's company who frowned upon superstition of any kind with the belief that the Americo-French submarine chaser No. 67 was certainly an unlucky associate for the ever-fortunate, always-undisturbed, and constantly plodding *Venetia*.

In addition to her endless solicitude for No. 67, the *Venetia*, during the continuance of this seemingly interminable storm, was frequently summoned to the assistance of the handsome but not very seaworthy flagship *Nokomis*. This vessel had been built on the Lakes for pleasure service in those waters only, and her high freeboard and tenderly constructed machinery were indeed poorly adapted to sea service, expecially the kind of service now demanded of her. On one occa-

sion this signal to "render assistance to *Nokomis*" came when the seas were running higher than ever, and it was by no means certain that the *Venetia* could drop her tow and turn suddenly in the opposite direction. But "orders is orders" and when the signal was brought to Captain Porterfield he controlled an exclamation of surprise and said:

"We may never make the turn, but here goes!"

Then, when the helm was hard over and the turn had been made without shipping engulfing seas, he turned to the watch officer on the bridge, and growled:

"No wonder they called us the 'Suicide Fleet' when we left Philadelphia!"

One by one the tow-lines of the *Nokomis* had parted beyond recovery, until her store of spare ones was exhausted, and the *Venetia* was compelled to supply her with new ones until she had no spare ones left. She would indeed have been in a sore predicament had she lost the only one now in somewhat precarious use as a binding cord between herself and a certain rebellious infant officially designated as "submarine chaser No. 67." During this storm she had been, following as many partings of her tow-line, variously in tow of the *Venetia*, *Nokomis*, *Galatea*, and *Penobscot*, and it was hoped that this time she might be held in subjection. But again the tow-line parted close to the chaser's bridle; many hours were spent in standing off and on to pass the repaired line aboard, and after several ineffectual attempts, Captain Porterfield ordered it chopped adrift altogether and the chaser was compelled to proceed under her own power, following in the wake of the *Venetia* as closely as she could.

# CHAPTER XV

## THE LOST SUBMARINE CHASERS

ARRIVAL AT PONTA DELGADA—"VENETIA" ALONE UNSCATHED—AN OFFICER'S COLLAPSE—SHORE LEAVE AT PONTA DELGADA.

ON the twenty-third of January, after sixteen days of continuous stormy weather, the picturesque little harbor of Ponta Delgada, Azores, was reached. The *Galatea* was already waiting there with her chaser alongside, and reported that she had never once lost her tow-line. As to most of the other towing vessels, however, these strenuous sixteen days had been more disastrous than had been anticipated, for all of them except the *Venetia* had lost one or more men overboard, and one of the chasers lost three men out of her small crew of twenty-five all told. Worse even than that, three of the chasers were missing altogether, and the U. S. tug *Concord*, after discovering that her tow was not in port, immediately put out in search of her, since, if she were never found, her commander must be subjected to a general court martial.

The *Venetia*, too, having proved herself to be the best sea boat of the squadron, as well as the speediest, was ordered to proceed to the westward in search of the missing boats, and at once got under way. But although she steered over many different courses for more than a

HARBOR OF PONTA DELGADA

WATER GATE, PONTA DELGADA

week, covering in all more than 10,000 square miles of ocean, none of the chasers was sighted, so the course was retraced back to Ponta Delgada. Two days later, the *Concord* returned, reporting that she had been equally unsuccessful, and her unfortunate charge must be given up for lost. Later reports developed the lamentable truth that she had gone down with all on board, and the order summoning the *Concord's* commander to a general court martial followed shortly thereafter.

During the sixteen days' stay in Ponta Delgada tidings came to the effect that one of the remaining lost chasers had been picked up by a Spanish steamer and towed back to Bermuda, to be sent on later with another convoy, while the other, as learned by radio, was proceeding back to Bermuda under her own power. Many weeks later the experiences of this staunch little vessel with a resourceful commander, as published by the French government, which decorated him, formed the one story of rare heroism that marked that memorable cruise. Having been lost by her convoying vessel, her commander, a hardy North Sea fisherman, now a quartermaster in the French Navy, decided to turn back toward Bermuda, the direction of the wind and waves apparently rendering that course the safer one. But soon her fuel became exhausted; the wind shifted again, and she tossed about helplessly, hundreds of miles away from the nearest land. Then the fisherman-skipper, fertile in expedient through many battles with the perils of the sea, decided upon the only one that could cope with the present emergency. A strong northwest wind now rendered it impossible to adopt other than an easterly course, so he extemporized sails from bedding, bent them upon the slender mast and drove before the brisk leading breeze. Supplies of food and water were

reduced to a point where mere starvation alone was avoided, and after a tempestuous struggle of twenty-nine days, that must have utterly prostrated a crew made of less sterling stuff, she finally made her way to the coast of France, a miraculous escape from enrollment among the many unfathomable mysteries of the deep.

This achievement was all the more amazing because the little vessel was entirely without navigating instruments of any kind, and when her remarkable experiences were related in the wardroom of the *Venetia* it was generally believed that "those fishermen must have smelled their way into their home waters."

Exhaustive survey again proved the splendid seaworthiness of the *Venetia*, for, aside from the few minor repairs always necessary, even on liners, after many days of "dirty weather," she had come out of the most harrowing storm of her career practically unscathed. The crew, too, after the resultant lassitude of *mal de mer* had disappeared, seemed fit to a man, and even ready for a repetition of the experiences of those grueling sixteen days and nights.

A severe loss was sustained, however, in the utter collapse of the navigator, Ensign MacKenzie. The patriotic desire to serve his country had inspired him to sacrifice the ease and quiet of the recitation hall for the exacting duties of an active naval officer, a service for which he was unfit in every way except those of book-learning and loyal sentiment. The grave responsibilities of navigating a vessel under such nerve-racking conditions, together with the many nights of almost unbroken worry and physical strain, were more than a delicate and sensitive nature could fight through, and a complete nervous breakdown was the result. He showed no

RAPID DELIVERY IN PONTA DELGADA

CAPTAIN LA ROCHE

ENSIGN DONALD MACKENZIE

improvement during the unexpectedly long stay at Ponta Delgada, a medical survey found him unfit for further service, and it was with deep regret that he was placed on board of U. S. S. *Mercury* invalided home. It is pleasing to be able to add, however, that, after three months' recuperation, the now "Mr." MacKenzie was found to be eminently fitted for a less rigorous branch of the government service and appointed assistant physicist in the Bureau of Standards of the Department of Commerce, which very important position he now holds, in scientific research of airplane-engine problems.

As has been said, the stay in Ponta Delgada was unexpectedly long, extending over a period of sixteen days. The men were granted almost unrestricted liberty ashore—as they were duly warned—for sightseeing purposes only, the regulations with reference to a "dry" navy, so stringently promulgated by the Honorable Josephus Daniels, being technically enforced under threat of severe penalties for any *too evident* transgression.

The *Venetia* lay quietly behind the long breakwater—no doubt through official consideration—to rest upon her well won laurels, while the ships that had lost their tows altogether passed in and out of the harbor in search of them or lay moored to the repair ship. These searches brought no successful results, however, and Captain La Roche, who had arrived on the *Nokomis* somewhat in advance of the squadron, was called for conference with the several commanders. As he came aboard, it was remarked that the loss of the submarine chasers under his command had seriously depressed him, and he looked neither to the right nor to the left—even for a glance at his old friend the lily farmer—as he passed down the companionway.

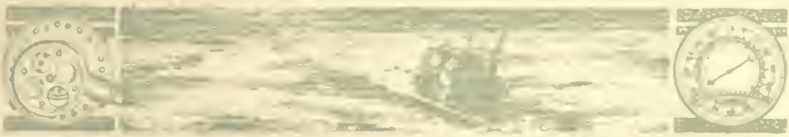
The conference resulted in the decision that, as the towing vessels were behind their orders in proceeding to their allotted destinations, and as every reasonable effort had been made to trace the lost chasers, the squadron should proceed on its way without further delay. Accordingly, on the sixth of January anchors were weighed once more, and the convoy proceeded eastward under orders to report at Leixos, Portugal.

As the Azores faded away into the mists astern, interchange of opinions and narratives of experiences could scarcely be said to have clothed Ponta Delgada with the gentle dignity of a Good Samaritan, in so far as the proper entertainment of sailors ashore had been concerned. Naturally, every effort was made to adhere strictly to the regulations in respect to the use of "hard liquor," and it was often remarked that infractions were not notoriously frequent in the American force. Not so, however, with the men of other nationalities, who had not been placed under similar restrictions, as has been carefully recorded by one of the *Venetia's* officers, who writes:

"The Azorean liquor is wild stuff, presumably put on the market long before it is aged. At all events, the sailors who ventured to imbibe it too freely seemed to go crazy. A petty officer jumped overboard while returning from liberty ashore, and sank, never to rise again; another jumped over the side after coming aboard his ship, but was rescued before he could drown; one of the French sailors of our own submarine chaser which was moored alongside was acting like a raving maniac and his vociferous demonstrations could be heard all over the harbor. His own shipmates could do nothing with him, so the commanding officer, Lieutenant Le Breton, asked for assistance to have him confined in our brig.

Accordingly, the gunner, a bo's'n's mate and a quartermaster volunteered, with true American enthusiasm in anything that looked like a 'scrap,' and soon had the mad Frenchman in limbo, and got him below by main force. But it was only a few moments before he was on deck again, yelling louder than ever, and it was not until the pharmacist's mate gave him a 'shot' of atramorphine that he finally quieted down and slept the sleep of the sadly misadvised. It is needless to say that, taking lesson from these episodes, there were few if any of us who were again very sorely tempted to evade the 'bone-dry' regulations of Secretary Daniels, at least in so far as Ponta Delgada was concerned."

Be it said, however, that these "dry" regulations were rather generally observed, although in a somewhat broadened sense, for they were never supposed to apply to those out of uniform, or—as the service men express it—while wearing "cits."



# CHAPTER XVI

## ENTERING THE WAR ZONE

THE FIRST SHOT—A QUESTION OF VERACITY—A MERITED PROMOTION—TESTING OPORTO PORT—OFF FOR "GIB."

THE towing squadron or convoy was now proceeding in regular formation with all towing vessels and chasers in sight, and in weather which seemed almost calm in comparison with that encountered beyond the Azores. Being now in the war zone beyond any doubt, extra lookouts were set and every precaution taken to meet surprise with counter surprise, for the *Venetia* was armed for any fray and manned by a now thoroughly well drilled and determined crew.

These intensive preparations were further accelerated by a radio warning, picked up on the day after leaving Ponta Delgada, to the effect that a vessel had just been torpedoed and needed assistance. Now the old qualm of regret at having been made a towboat again came into the long-expectant souls of the *Venetia's* crew. Here had come an oft-repeated S. O. S., but the wail for help could not be answered without cutting away the tow-line of submarine chaser No. 318 (the *Venetia's* new charge), and hurrying in the indicated direction contrary to orders, which, of course, was not to be thought of.

Vigilance never relaxed, however, for a single instant, day or night. Radio messages had again hissed out their warnings that submarines were active within the radius of the ship's wireless equipment, and so some member of our own squadron might be attacked at any moment. No floating object of any kind escaped the most searching scrutiny. Barrels, boxes, logs, pieces of wood, even a water-logged article of clothing, might conceal the periscope of an enemy "sea-sneak" (as one of the crew had renamed them), and must be subjected to examination of the most searching kind, with guns and depth charges ready for instant use. Some of these floating objects began to furnish ample proof that vessels had been torpedoed in the immediate neighborhood, for there were the easily discernible parts of merchant vessels, and a dead body lashed to one of them gave to the now eagerly expectant Californians their first glimpse of one of the actual casualties of this needless but obviously inevitable war.

A large squadron of fourteen vessels was sighted, and everyone knew that the enemy must know of its whereabouts and be in search of it. That afternoon the squadron had its first thrill of excitement through a veritable act of war, when a sharp report and a faint puff of smoke arose from the deck of the *Nahant*. It was learned by radio that she had actually made out an enemy periscope and fired at it, apparently without result, since it was not seen again, and the lookouts were ordered to be more alert than ever, if, indeed, such a thing were possible.

"On the night of the 10th," relates Ensign Howard, "during the first watch, Nicolini declared that he had actually seen the wake of a torpedo pass right under our stern, and caught a signal from the *Nahant* to the effect

that she could have gotten the submarine but was afraid to fire at her lest she hit the *Venetia*. At breakfast the next morning, however, the wardroom somewhat jocularly decided that both Nicolini and the *Nahant's* commander had been keeping so zealous a lookout that their imaginations may have been working overtime."

Nicolini's impressions as to Howard's veracity have not been obtainable, but it is needless to say that they would be in no sense complimentary.

Be this as it may, vigilance was no whit relaxed, for each wreath of smoke upon the horizon now became a German cruiser and each floating object a periscope. But all of the anxious gun-captains were doomed to disappointment, for the very next night the lights of Leixos, Portugal, were sighted, tow-lines were cast off from the chasers, and all vessels stood off and on until morning, it being too foggy to pick up the entrance to this truly balmy and beautiful little port.

Lieutenant Mangan was on watch at the time, with the ship merely making steerage way just outside the breakwater. The skipper laughed inwardly, but with true official dignity replied with the usual "Very well," as Mangan shouted from the deck:

"Fresh water, sir!"

The purpose of this bit of official information was not quite apparent, except that Mangan had come from the Great Lakes and was glad to discover indications of fresh water so far from home. Anyway, ever afterward, he was known as "Fresh Water Mangan."

It is a pleasant digression that is here made, for the purpose of calling attention to one of those promotions in the service which are alone the result of inherent merit and close application, rather than friendly favoritism or political preferment. The *Venetia* now had a

THE RIVER AT OPORTO

PUBLIC SQUARE, OPORTO

new and very capable watch officer in the person of Ensign W. L. De Camp, recently promoted from the grade of chief quartermaster. The career of young De Camp is another contradiction of the oft-repeated statement that only an Annapolis man has any show for promotion in the navy, as has been duly set forth and established by a sketch of this young officer's life in Chapter III.

Leixos is not far from Oporto, and when liberty was granted to the many who asked for it, there is no record that the executive officer said anything concerning the prohibition regulations of Mr. Daniels, probably because he entertained a certain kind of sympathy for those who might have felt they had missed something in visiting Oporto for the first time without having sampled its famous wine. To the credit of the *Venetia's* crew, however, it may be said that her log contains no entry referring to the overindulgence of any member of it in Oporto port, nor, for the matter of that, in any other beverage with the illegal "kick" to it.

The stay of four days at Leixos was not productive of any appreciable degree of interest, and it was quite devoid of adventure or excitement of any kind. The officers of the several ships in the harbor naturally exchanged visits and held occasional teas, to match yarns concerning the "nasty weather in the Roaring Forties," speculate as to the respective fates of the lost chasers, and no doubt to compare diaries—many of the reserve men kept them religiously—so that none of their statements might conflict. The crew, after several liberty parties ashore, lolled about the decks, and complained that there was no excitement in Leixos, and little or no hard liquor to be had by those who dared to disregard the regulations. Some of the boys with a fair

knowledge of "Spanish as she is spoke" in California tried to make it do in having themselves understood in Portugal, but to no purpose, and insulting epithets were applied to those who had exploited the fallacy that Spanish and Portuguese are singularly alike. The same mistake had been made at the Azores, but it was hoped that, being next to Spain, there might be more analogy between her language and that of her next-door neighbor, so again had the "know-all" missed fire.

On the morning of the eighteenth of February "Prepare to get under way" was signaled and read without regret. It was learned that now the squadron of chasers would be divided, one-half of it to proceed to Brest, France, under the *Nokomis*, and the other half to Gibraltar, led by the *Venetia*, which arrangement was duly carried into effect. This was attended by no ceremony except the waving of hats and binoculars as the *Nokomis* proceeded with her little family of chasers to the north, and the *Venetia* proudly led hers to the south, with everyone on board happy in the reflection that soon she would be out of the towing business, it was hoped, until the end of the war.

The *Venetia* now had submarine chaser No. 172 in tow, and the infant proved quite tractable, giving no annoyance whatever during the three days' run to Gibraltar, and in fact each of the towing vessels was enabled to report that its change in charges had been altogether for the better.

GIBRALTAR AT SUNRISE

# CHAPTER XVII

## THE ROCK OF GIBRALTAR

DOUBTS AS TO ITS IMPREGNABILITY—AMAZING WAR CONDITIONS—UNPATRIOTIC HUCKSTERS—A FAKE BULL-FIGHT AND A REAL ONE.

GIBRALTAR—one of the most notable wonders of the world; Nature's proudest fortress and a nation's proudest boast; whose beetling summits command an ocean and a sea, presumably without danger of dispute; whose impregnability has been neither questioned nor tested, and yet which no one has ever ventured to doubt—was reached at last!

The aspect of the mighty "Rock" is not so imposing when its splendid harbor is entered from the west, or, so to speak, by the back door. Its solemn majesty is vastly more impressive and threatening when approached from the Mediterranean, but every mother's son on the *Venetia's* decks who had not seen it before regarded it, as nearly everyone does, with admiring awe as the quartermaster hoisted the ship's name letters on rounding Europa Point, and she stood in toward the naval base at the foot of the long mole.

Here there was every movement to indicate the existence of a great war. The harbor, which, as one of the boys remarked, seemed on a former visit merely a haven

for the safe anchorage of a big fleet of coal hulks, was now choked, almost to the point of danger, with every known type of fighting and merchant craft, in dock, at anchor, or passing in and out, the former with threatening arrogance. It was pleasing to note, too, that, after years of governmental parsimony, the American flag could be seen floating from stern staff and main truck in numbers commensurate with the thrilling dignity of the world's greatest nation.

There were battleships, cruisers, destroyers, submarines, coaling vessels and transports, almost matching in strength and efficiency the assembled fleet of Gibraltar's invincible mistress, and everyone on board lifted his hat or waved his hand to both, out of pride in the one, respect for the other.

After the medical survey that resulted in the invaliding home of Ensign MacKenzie, Captain Porterfield had despairingly decided to be his own navigator until a more experienced one could be assigned to him, and of course was in his conning station until the *Venetia* should come to anchor. It was told that as he turned away from the signal dials and was about to descend the gangway to the main deck, a young officer who was admiring Gibraltar for the first time, accosted him:

"Wonderful, isn't it, sir?"

"Very!" was the laconic reply.

"And absolutely impregnable!"

"Yes, it is—on paper. But I've a notion that if these two fleets were to move outside and blaze away at it, it would take the world just about six hours to learn that 'Old Gib's' impregnability had been a matter of poetic license all along." And then the skipper went below to prepare himself for the inevitable official courtesies

which naval etiquette demands must be interchanged immediately upon entering a new port, beginning, of course, with the officer in command.

The *Venetia* was moored at the dockyard sea-wall alongside of the scout vessel *Yankton*, whose fine record long ago established the fact that—in spite of the adverse opinions of many old-line officers—yachts can sometimes be converted into light cruisers quite as efficient as some of those especially designed for that purpose. Her career, it may be recalled, began with the Spanish war; she was the guide-ship for the great American fleet in the circling of the globe, and was still in active service, while newer and apparently better yachts were being sent home with most discouraging regularity.

In so far as her activities in the present war are concerned, however, the *Yankton's* record is not so unblemished, for she was responsible for one of the most deplorable mistakes of its naval history. On one occasion the lookout reported the periscope of a submarine stealing directly toward the ship, and there being no distinguishing mark to betray her nationality, she was naturally enough taken for an enemy.

All hands were called to their stations, and the *Yankton* made a sharp turn toward the diver with the intention of ramming her. She submerged, however, apparently without attempting to disclose her identity; several depth charges were released, and the awful impacts forced her to the surface again, crippled and helpless. She was then raked fore and aft by three-inch and machine guns, when it was suddenly discovered that she was no enemy at all, but a friendly submarine under the French flag.

Assistance was immediately rendered, of course, when the sad disclosure was made that the captain and several

of his crew had been killed and the vessel damaged beyond repair. The usual diplomatic apologies were made, which was all that could be done, and immediately thereafter an improved system of identification signals was adopted, for night as well as day. It must be said, however, that none of these have proved satisfactory, for an American submarine, during the winter of 1918, was shot to pieces by an American destroyer and beached in Charleston harbor, narrowly escaping going down with all on board.

These two incidents would appear to indicate that, since the submarine must be fought blindfolded, and it is so nearly impossible to distinguish between friend and foe, this kind of warfare—unfair either in attack or defense—should be abandoned altogether.

Submarine and gas bomb are analogous in their cruel antagonism to fair play, and it is to be hoped that when that delectable but cumbersome diplomatic elephant known as the League of Nations—one caustic critic substitutes an "o" for the "a"—shall eventually have declared itself ready for business, a law will be written into the international code removing them both from future warfare, and in such unmistakable phrasing that it may not some day or other be regarded as a "scrap of paper."

As the two vessels lay side by side, and were discussed by the mechanically inclined, the conclusion was reached that the *Venetia*, at least in so far as seaworthiness and belligerency were concerned, was quite the equal of the other vessel; for, aside from the tightening of a plate seam or two, made leaky by collision with a submarine chaser steered by a hysterical Gaul, she was in as prime condition as when she steamed down San Pablo Bay from Mare Island Navy Yard.

THE TOWN FROM "THE ROCK"

"THE ROCK" FROM THE TOWN

In verification of this statement, Admiral Niblack, in command of the naval base at Gibraltar, came aboard shortly after arrival, inspected both ship and crew, then went away expressing entire satisfaction at the appearance and effectiveness of the sturdy young suffragette from San Diego.

Naturally, the first inquiries from those whose rank gave them the right to ask—together with much speculative guessing on the part of petty officers and crew—were with reference to what the ship's future duties were expected to be. Having already demonstrated that she was a much more capable towing vessel than some of those specially classified as navy tugs, it was feared by some that she might be continued in that menial and unmilitary service. But the passing in and out of the harbor of great fleets of heavily laden merchantmen—which of course must be convoyed over the submarine-infested Mediterranean—led the optimistic ones aboard to venture small wagers to the effect that this was to be the altogether desirable activity to which the *Venetia* was to be assigned.

This prediction became strengthened, if not fully verified, when men came aboard to take away the spare parts for the submarine chasers, and Captain La Roche —who had again been a passenger since leaving Ponta Delgada—bade the ship an affectionate farewell and was transferred, bag and baggage, to a French tug bearing the not altogether inappropriate name of *Canard*.

But it was not until the dockyard workmen from the naval base installed recognition signal devices of the latest type, and racks and launching gear for depth charges strictly up to date, that there remained no further doubt as to the gloriously warlike future of the

*Venetia.* Then when heavier depth charges were added to the already imposing store in the magazines, entirely obliterating all notion as to the desirability of "safety first" even in war, a wag from the "Black Watch" poked his head out of the engine-room hatch and remarked:

"My, oh, my! If we get a diver for every load o' them ash-cans we heave overboard, crosses de gerry 'll be easier to get than Bull Durham."

Contemplation of the possible early fulfillment of these most hopeful signs naturally diverted conversation to other topics, the principal one being discussion of coming liberties ashore, as well as the town, which seemed amply prepared to supply them with manifold opportunities for the complete exercise of them. Surely enough, Gibraltar was now an inextricable confusion of noises, peoples, tongues, and fighting, jostling crowds, when placed by memory in comparison with the peaceful, picturesque, and quaint little city remembered by those who had been former tourist visitors from liners passing in and out of the strait.

Everything seemed multiplied by ten. There were ten times as many Hindoo and Arab peddlers; ten times as many barkers crying the wares of ten times as many grasping hucksters; ten times as many dark-skinned and gaudily handkerchiefed Spanish maidens with ten times as many laces to sell at ten times more extortionate rates. There were ten times as many cab drivers, who exacted ten times as much fare, and ten times as many places of amusement, the character of whose entertainment offered must truthfully be expressed by minus ten.

Nevertheless, it was full of brilliant color and busy life, this new Gibraltar, and life and color are all that

the sailor ashore expects or cares for, no matter what the cost to his pocket, his appetites, his digestion, or his morals. This profligate tendency of the jacky on liberty was again duly recorded on the return of the first party from the *Venetia's* forecastle, when it was questioned by another expectant group just preparing to leave.

"How did they treat you over there?" was asked.

"Trimmed us good and proper, but it was great, all-righty!"

Some of the men, attracted by glaring posters and the assurances of loudly necktied and waistcoated agents employed to "tout" its exciting and murderous episodes, crowded noisily into carriages and were taken over to La Linea to witness their first bull-fight. La Linea (the Spanish equivalent for the English "the line") is a little town on the low-lying sandspit just outside the limits of the British concession, where the *dolce far niente* customs of its inhabitants immediately inspire the visitor with the conviction that it has neither sanitary laws nor departments of street cleaning or public health.

It has a fairly good-sized arena, however, devoted to the disgusting cruelties of the great national sport of Spain, where bull-fights are given as often as an audience can be gathered, which does not much care whether it be thrilled or fooled. This was the impression left upon the minds of the three carriage-loads of "Venetians" as they hurried back to Gibraltar, indignant at having witnessed so palpable a fake. One of them answered, in reply to questions from curious shipmates who had been frugal enough to receive a report in advance from the more reckless scouting party:

"Bunk! The bull wouldn't fight, and the horses couldn't have ran away if he'd tried to chase 'em. They

killed him all right, but it was a mercy, for he'd uv dropped dead the next time they chased him out."

Better reports were brought aboard, however, by other liberty men who had taken the longer and more expensive trip northward to beautiful Algeciras, where met the peace commissioners who arranged the terms of peace between Spain and the United States in 1899. Here there were held almost daily bull-fights, given with the horrifying perfection of this cruel shedding of the blood of dumb creatures, with famous star matadores, horses full of spirit, and bulls warranted to gore at the first sting of the banderillas. It is safe to say, however, that none of the ship's company—excepting the few of Spanish blood—had been in any way inspired by Spain's great national sport. They would far rather have witnessed a game of baseball, or a brace of nervy bantam-weights in a sixteen-foot ring, and many of them had almost turned the arena into one when several officers were almost ejected from their box for the seemingly unpardonable offense of cheering the bull.

REFUSING TO BE INFURIATED

PATIENTLY AWAITING DEATH

# CHAPTER XVIII

## REAL SERVICE AT LAST

FIRST DEPARTURE FROM GIBRALTAR—COMPOSITION OF THE FIRST CONVOY—TO BIZERTA, TUNIS AND RETURN.

THE celerity and completeness with which the dockyard workmen installed improved gears, and, assisted by the crew, hurried extra ammunition, fuel oil, and stores aboard, inspired all hands with true ardor for the calling in which they had enlisted, inspired by their own watchword—better to them than the securing of democracy for the world—"Remember the *Lusitania!*"

Now it became noised about that there would soon be "something doing," for the good ship *Venetia* had been chosen to assist in the convoying of great merchant fleets, to protect them from the ghostly submarine, in waters where it was hoped they would be, as the lily farmer remarked, "thicker than porpoises off Catalina and easier to get."

Less than ten days were consumed in this work, and on the afternoon of the second of March, a British tug warped the *Venetia* away from the dock into the stream, and she moved into her allotted place in the imposing fleet of merchantmen and ships of war. Her actual belligerent career had begun in dead earnest, with the

nerves of the crew keyed up to a high pitch of enthusiasm, and the greatly relieved Captain Porterfield complacently official, but inwardly "spoiling for a fight."

It might not be amiss to furnish the reader here with a brief description of the guarding of a convoy, which was a stringent rule and one that was seldom if ever deviated from. When a convoy was "formed up" the escort vessels—such as the *Venetia*, *Cythera*, and the trawlers—were first signaled by the flagship to take stations. Then they left their "forming-up stations" at the heads of columns, and proceeded to the "escort stations" assigned them in the "plan of convoy." This was usually on the port or starboard bow, or port or starboard quarter of the convoy, where the escort vessels zigzagged continuously on their stations, maintaining a distance ranging from four hundred yards to eight hundred yards from the vessel nearest to their assigned stations.

The trim little *Venetia* looked saucier and more businesslike than ever as she took the station assigned to her outside the long breakwater with Europa Point bearing southeast. Her engines throbbed nervously as if in protest against what seemed to her crew the slowness of signaling the convoy into formation. Perhaps it was being done with as much celerity as was consistent with safety, and, moreover, the convoy commander, Captain Roper, evidently knew his business. But the bearer of official rank, especially if he be youthful, is very critical, and generally has a notion that he can do what it is necessary to do, just a little better than the other fellow.

Finally, however, and no doubt with the usual dispatch, the convoy got under way in eight columns, the

order of the columns and the stations of the twenty-seven ships composing them being as follows:

First column, Fr. trawler *Isolde*, S. S. *Tunsdall*, S. S. *Caterin*, S. S. *Floreston*; second column, a British armed tugboat, S. S. *Dunstay*, S. S. *Gyp*, S. S. *Salina*; third column, U. S. S. *Venetia*, S. S. *Clan Chisholm*, S. S. *Avona*, S. S. *Wahnesnock*, S. S. *Meaford*; fourth column, S. S. *Pacific Transport*, S. S. *Giore*, S. S. *Armando*, S. S. *Kourek*; fifth column, U. S. S. *Cythera*, S. S. *Buron Abrossan*, S. S. *Karer Prince*, S. S. *Giuseppe*, S. S. *Figuera*; sixth column, S. S. *Bylands*, S. S. *Ellin*, S. S. *Shadwell*; seventh column, U. S. S. *Artemus*, S. S. *Venus*, S. S. *Bomdeleforde*, S. S. *Ellis*; eighth column, British tugboat, S. S. *Ravenston*, S. S. *Marue de Larrinago*, S. S. *Hesanger*.

At nightfall all ships of this imposing fleet that marked the beginning of the *Venetia's* actual war duty were of course compelled to steam without lights, and stringent orders had been issued to the effect that all should be inspected for lights every half-hour. This ominous darkness made navigation not only extremely difficult but most hazardous, owing to the close proximity of the vessels to each other, which rendered collision probable at almost any time. But the precaution with reference to darkened ships was truly imperative, for the showing of a single light might expose a target toward which a lurking submarine might launch its deadly torpedo and send millions of dollars in cargo value to the bottom, to say nothing of hundreds of precious lives.

An armed vessel was the special guard of its own column, and kept close watch over it, although it was frequently signaled to make hurried trips toward either horizon in search of a possible enemy, which well-grounded rumor, and evidences of many destructive

actualities, had made as numerous as a school of dolphins in pursuit of a shoal of herring. The indefiniteness of these rumors, however, did not serve to allay anxiety or lessen precautions in the slightest degree, for that vessels had very recently been torpedoed in these waters was made all too evident by the litter of wreckage on the surface of the sea, consisting of various bits of the woodwork of ships, barrels, life-rafts, and unmanned boats.

As no lights of any kind were permitted at night, whenever a vessel of the *Venetia's* column would surreptitiously hang one over the stern, as a preventive against collision with her nearest following neighbor, it became one of the many duties of the *Venetia* to hurry toward the offender and order a return at once to Stygian darkness. It is on such perilous runs as these that moonlight comes like an angel of mercy to nervous navigators, and dispels the continual dread that obsesses the souls of officers and lookouts during the long watches of the night, although it also exposes the vessels to the watchful enemies that are supposed to be everywhere about them. While moonlight is not so helpful to navigation as even a small lantern on stern or masthead, it at least furnishes sufficient light to betray the approach of dangerous friends, and establish some sort of safety zone in which to detect a possible collider that may suddenly appear out of the darkness. Happily, however, on this first convoying cruise, while sombre clouds obscured a moon that might have shone as a beacon of security, there were occasional glimpses of her which provided the desired protection.

On the third day out of Gibraltar, a French dirigible and two airplanes appeared from beyond the mists to the eastward, made several graceful detours above and

about the convoy, and then disappeared in the direction of Bizerta, as if in mute encouragement that the course was clear of enemies ahead of it. Presumably this was their motive, for there was no impediment of any kind to peaceful progress, and the convoy came quietly to anchor at dusk in Sebra Bay within sight of the city.

Like all of the semi-Oriental cities on the North African coast, Bizerta is truly attractive, but open to criticism from those unaccustomed to the more or less tarnished beauty of cities of its class. It is quite picturesque, if not indeed quaintly beautiful, when viewed from afar; but its many interesting features soon become submerged in coats of grime and airs surcharged with strangely pungent odors when contemplated from one of the balconies of its numerous cafés.

Liberty parties from vessels of war have a peculiar faculty of sizing up the interesting features of any port of visit, and while the viewpoint of criticism begins at the cafés and ends there, they are usually not far wrong in the general estimate of the place as a liberty port worth having. At the Café Boulevard, of the Grand Hotel, for instance—not at all a bad one, by the way—there were many beautiful women, French, Arabian, and a mixture of both. Their cordiality was very marked, for they seemed to vie with each other to be hospitable to "*les jolis Américains*," who had so unselfishly come over the seas to the assistance of stricken France. But there the value of Bizerta ended, in so far as the *Venetia's* jackies were concerned, for, on the following day, when she headed a convoy of eight ships for a return to Gibraltar, their impression of their first real business port of entry was quite eloquently expressed in ten words of unqualified disgust, which was repeated by nearly all of them:

"Not a drop of bourbon or rye in the place!"

In contrast with the menial duty of towing vessels that refused to be towed, without some show of protest or inefficient handling and officering, convoying loomed up in the minds of the California ship's company as being positively the best "job" to which she could possibly have been assigned. The many hazards in connection with it made it all the more exciting to the gallant Westerners from shores that had never resounded with the roars of modern battle, and every nerve was strained in hopeful anticipation of the first real "honest-to-goodness scrap."

Skipper Porterfield had proved himself a most capable officer and promising strategist in peaceful waters, but here, in the very center of a mighty circle from which radiated hundreds of binoculared visions toward danger's horizon, he became a very glutton for work, activity, and never-ending precaution. Watches were doubled, and it was now "watch on and watch off," meaning that they followed each other in such rapid succession that there was little hope of continued rest for anyone. So the unfortunate "Venetian" who could not drop off into peaceful slumber as soon as his head touched his pillow was likely to toss about for a while, close his eyes, and then be tumbled out to find that he had not really been asleep at all. But this was war: war was the only purpose for which he had enlisted, and it has not been established, either by inference or written word, that any one of the *Venetia's* boys ever yet complained, excepting only when the enemy insisted upon keeping too discreetly aloof.

This it certainly did on the return to Gibraltar, for not even a floating barrel, piece of wreckage, or a suspicious-looking upturned boat appeared to break the

ENTERING BIZERTA

BIZERTA'S RESTFUL POPULATION

monotony of an amicably heaving sea. The skipper, however, seemed anxious always, and was particularly irate at the poor station (place in line), which appeared to be almost continuously persisted in by the commanders of the vessels composing the convoy. Perhaps they were more or less inexperienced in navigating where they could not see that ten feet ahead (once referred to by ex-Navigator Krebs), or the ever-present danger of a deadly thrust from beyond the darkness had made them converts to the theory of self-protection first, then obedience to orders.

Be this as it may, the entire seven ships were spreading apart at nightfall, not one was to be seen at daylight, and the *Venetia* was selected to be the faithful collie, whose duty it was to circle the horizon in search of them and bark them back again into a visible and orderly flock. This small convoy of seven ships had caused more anxiety than had the first large one of twenty-seven, and all hands on board heaved sighs of relief when, after the usual three days allotted for the run, Gibraltar was reached, there was a line of liberty men in front of the "Exec's" office, and the skipper went ashore with his officer of communications for conference with the commanders of the ships that were to compose the next convoy to the eastward.

These conferences were always held prior to the departure of a convoy, so that there might be definite understandings between the commanders of convoying warships and those of the merchantmen as to courses, regulations, signals, and general control, which is always directed from what may be called the flagship of the convoy. The most stringent regulation was to the effect that, following a conference, the commanders of merchantmen must return at once to their ships and not be

permitted ashore again before the departure of the convoy. This was a necessary precaution taken to avert the possibility that one of the commanders might inadvertently divulge the convoy's sailing time and destination.

The Gibraltar conferences were held in the dockyard schoolhouse, immediately adjoining the headquarters of the British governor, Admiral Sir Rupert Miles. After the various commanders had assembled, they were first instructed as to the main points of routine by the junior convoy officer (a British lieutenant), and then, after being addressed at what would appear to be much too much length by the admiral and senior officer of the escort, the several merchant skippers were sent to their ships under surveillance, while the naval officers, to whom the same stringent rule did not apply, repaired to their respective commands, the cafés, or the clubs—perhaps a little oftener the latter.

# CHAPTER XIX

## VARIABLE EXPERIENCES

EVENTLESS CONVOYING BECOMES MONOTONOUS—A GAME OF BASE-BALL—TRANSFER OF ENSIGN "NICK"—LOSING A CONVOY.

THOSE were busy but uneventful days, and every member of the ship's company awoke from a sort of mental lassitude and enthused again, when, after the usual expensive and now rather flat week-end at Gibraltar, Europa Point was again rounded, a convoy of twenty ships was formed, and a course made under the shadow of the mighty rock to the eastward. There were three of these convoying trips made between Bizerta and Gibraltar, with very brief stops at either, and yet each time one of the ports was cleared rumors were in circulation to the effect that the Austrians had become busier than ever with their divers, in addition to those of the Hun ally, and this time one would surely be bagged. As many times were the battle-hungry "Venetians" disappointed, however, for not once during these three "forward and back" voyages—some impolitely called them ferry trips—had a single incident occurred to disturb their monotony. There was never a floating object that might have been taken, or mistaken, for the ambush of a periscope, nor any craft save those in the convoy to

remind one that there was a war anywhere. Even they seemed innocent enough, except for the armed craft that kept watch over them day and night.

On one of these trips, however—mentioned in the ship's log as of date March 23rd, during the morning watch—there occurred one of those false alarms, unavoidable always, because it is never known what a floating object might not have concealed behind it, and to pass it by unnoticed might bring confusion, disaster, and death. To the credit of the regularly manned and officered vessels of the naval force, it may be said parenthetically that in a convoy most of these false alarms have come from the convoyed vessels themselves, and so it happened on the occasion referred to.

The present squadron was moving quietly to the eastward in good formation at a speed of five knots per hour, when suddenly the sharp bark of a four-inch gun disturbed the silence of the gathering sunrise. All lookouts detected the smoke of a steamer whose hull seemed just rising above the horizon, and apparently making for the convoy at full speed. It was probably this target at which the shot had been fired from the merchantman *Moulin Blanc*, and it was closely followed by two from another freighter, *Zamora*, as well as others from what were known as the civilians of the convoy.

"General quarters" was at once sounded aboard the *Venetia* and a broadcast wireless message dispatched to Bizerta, which at the time was almost within sighting distance. All hands were gloriously elated because the long-expected engagement had come at last, and the untried tenderfoot was to have his first opportunity for proving to the strutting old-timer that he could look into the smoke of exploding enemy shells without a tremor in his unscarred frame.

DISTANT VIEW OF CONVOY

THE WATCHFUL EYE ABOVE

It began to look like business indeed when the firing continued and three armed hydroplanes, followed by two dirigibles, appeared from the direction of Bizerta and began to circle about the convoy. But the firing ceased as suddenly as it had begun; the aircraft turned tail and hurried back to port, and then the radio sparks hissed out the somewhat ludicrous intelligence that, upon investigation, the supposed enemy submarine had turned out to be an upturned boat floating innocently upon the sunlit waters!

A similar incident occurred on the day after a new convoy was formed in Bizerta to be taken to Gibraltar. A shot was heard and the radios gave warning of the picking up of a "suspicious object." "General quarters" was again sounded and every man jack of the *Venetia's* crew was at his post, feeling that this time his opportunity for "distinguished and unusual service" had really come, when the radioman on watch was directed to spread it broadcast that the said suspicious object was merely a piece of wreckage. It was not difficult to understand, however, that anxious lookouts might easily have made the mistake, for it turned out to be a small deckhouse, evidently from some torpedoed vessel, with a protruding ventilator or piece of pipe, which obviously had been mistaken for a periscope.

Captain Porterfield, however, with the double object of not entirely disappointing his crew and at the same time anxious to see how effectively the hitherto unreliable gun Number One might be expected to respond when called upon, ordered a shot to be taken at the now no longer suspicious object. "Ready when wanted, after all," he laughed, as the projectile tore through the target eight hundred yards away, making considerably more of a wreck of it. These two incidents are mentioned

for the reason that they supplied the only excitement of several "ferriages" between Gibraltar and Bizerta, and then again, when war is so full of harrowing details, why should not the humor of it be recorded as well?

On the 14th of April at Gibraltar there was made one of those official transfers which almost invariably come without warning, and generally for no very obvious reason. Ensign D. V. Nicolini was transferred to U. S. S. *Surveyor*, and Lieutenant Conrad T. Bussell reported on board as navigating officer.

The mists that come of tears were in "Nick's" eyes as he bade all hands good-bye, from forecastle to quarter-deck, and passed down the gangplank to the mole where the *Venetia* was moored. He had been her first officer for five years during her yachting days; had exerted considerable influence after enlistment to be assigned to her, in the hope of being on her roster of officers until her war career had ended. But the needs of the service are inexorable. The *Venetia* needed an expert navigator; someone with considerable sea experience was required on board of the *Surveyor*; Captain Porterfield selected Nicolini as being the best man he could spare, and so he passed away to a stranger ship.

In Lieutenant Bussell the exacting skipper found just the type of navigator he had so long been searching for, and he remained in that most important of all the "jobs" aboard ship until the *Venetia's* final retirement from belligerent service. A brief résumé of his life and busy career is here given in his own breezy style:

"By far the biggest event in my life took place on May 15, 1891, when I entered this vale of tears and gladness at a point known as Irvington, Virginia, on the eastern coast of Heaven. I took the usual course of kindergarten, and from there in gradual stages occupied

various forms and benches until I reached the Randolph-Macon Academy at Bedford City, Virginia. Here my lifelong streak of good luck permitted me to get on the right side of the 'profs' and the wrong side of their demerit system. However, they let me lead the class that first year, but during the second I played football, so, of course, was too busy to fool away time with such exacting people as 'profs.' Two years at the University of Virginia followed, and I then entered the Coast and Geodetic Survey, where, in some strange way or other, I managed to receive a commission as junior hydrographic and geodetic engineer from no less a person than President Wilson himself.

"Made a cruise on the Atlantic coast correcting government charts, two voyages to Alaska; and at the outbreak of hostilities found myself on the *Surveyor*, a vessel built for Alaskan waters but now ordered to European waters, via Bermuda and the Azores, with submarine chasers in tow, then took a couple of American 'subs' to Bantry, Ireland. Our first convoy was from Pembroke, Wales, to 'Gib' with thirty-two ships and no other escort, and then came a bunch of Mediterranean convoys until I was ordered to the *Venetia*, April 13, 1918.

"Any attempt to preserve the memory of the joys and sorrows, the bits of pathos and humor, the thrills and monotonies, and the thousand other little details which make up the lives of officers and crew on such a cruise as the *Venetia* took during the big scrap will surely receive all the help I can give it. Certain I am that her history will never be forgotten as long as a single man in her jovial ship's company is alive."

The next day, there came an order that was intensely pleasing to both officers and enlisted men, but one of

much concern and a more or less humiliating surprise to the ship's athletic officer. This was to the effect that a game of baseball had been scheduled by the Base Athletic Committee between U. S. S. *Venetia* and U. S. S. *Castine*, to be played on the afternoon of April 16, without further notice. The result of this order, showing as it does how even pleasurable emergencies can be successfully met when the official in charge "doesn't lay down on his job," can best be given in the words of Ensign Howard, who had been appointed the ship's athletic officer, but, in the rush of more technical duties, had apparently forgotten all about it.

"The order came to me like a bolt out of a clear sky," says the athletic-appearing young officer from Los Angeles. "Of course, I knew something about baseball, and felt myself entirely qualified when I accepted the appointment of ship's athletic officer. But I had been too busy in learning how to be a fighting naval unit, and hadn't even gone into the matter of organizing a team. We had no baseball equipment whatever, the boys who could play the game had had no practice, and it looked as though we were fated to make a sorry showing against the team from the *Castine*, which had already created something of a reputation in contests with other ships, and finally ended by winning the base pennant. But 'orders is orders,' as the saying goes, so I went about the crew in search of baseball material, and fortunately unearthed a number of 'records.' Of course team-work was impossible, but the material looked promising enough, so we prepared for the battle on the basis that there's nothing to be lost in trying any old thing once.

"The *Venetia* team duly appeared at the appointed time, in only white trousers, undershirts, and navy

BASEBALL AT GIBRALTAR

"THE MANLY ART OF SELF-DEFENSE"

shoes, while the *Castine* boys were arrayed in full diamond uniforms, spiked shoes—everything. Sure enough, that game was 'some surprise party,' for we caught the *Castine* team on what must have been an off day, and beat them by the respectable but nerve-racking score of 12 to 11."

Three days later, on April 19, before sunrise, the start was made for the fourth trip to Bizerta, with a small convoy of nine ships and seven escort vessels, the *Venetia* as usual being in the leading port position. This date is most memorable in the recollections of those who composed the ship's company of the *Venetia*, in that it marks her departure on that cruise during which she was first in positive action, and proved that the predictions made of her reliability whenever called upon to strike at an enemy, or to resist one, had been fully justified.

The formation of this convoy—the first one to be attacked since the ship had been engaged in the service—is given in chart form, so that the reader may be able to gather from it some idea of the positions of the several vessels when the alarm came. As has been said, the convoy was a small one, consisting of nine merchant vessels in addition to the seven protectors, and the former were distinguished by two-letter flags from the international signal code, flying from the most conspicuous place in the rigging.

The convoy proceeded on the same course as heretofore toward Bizerta, at a speed of seven knots, the *Venetia* zigzagging outward for observation and inward again to keep her division in formation. This was no easy matter, for the squadron of princely cargoed merchantmen, although every one of them was heavily armed, seemed continually wandering from its course. Each of the commanders apparently felt himself the

best judge of how to avoid danger, and hurried away on his own responsibility, for all the world like a chick in a brood frightened by a hawk. It seemed to make no difference whatever that there were four pugnacious mothers whose business it was to fly to their defense on the approach of an enemy.

CONVOY FORMATION

On the other hand, it may be urged, in defense of the several anxious navigators, that security of attack from an enemy is more than counterbalanced by the danger of collision among themselves, steaming, as they were compelled to do, in the dark, with nothing to guide them but the faint throbbing of near-by propellers. But even this is a guide of almost negligible value, for the pro-

pellers of heavily laden ships are generally too deep in the water to emit any sound. At all events, whatever the cause, there were several mornings on this Gibraltar-Bizerta run when not a single vessel was in sight of any other in the convoy.

Moreover, it is only just to say in addition that the merchantmen were not always alone to blame for these records of "ships in poor station." Sometimes the guardships themselves made poor guesses as to their positions, and lost the convoy altogether, an unpardonable offense in the opinion of their commanders, but an unavoidable misfortune in the belief of the offending navigators.

On one occasion the *Venetia* found herself in this somewhat humiliating position, following a night of unusual darkness. When day dawned, to his dismay the officer in charge of the morning watch discovered that the convoy was nowhere in sight—not even a wreath of smoke being anywhere visible. Captain Porterfield appeared from below and hurried up the companionway ladder to the bridge at least two steps at a time.

"Where's the convoy?" he asked, with clenched teeth and his flashing blue eyes illy concealing a threatening explosion of fury.

"I don't know, sir," was the nervous and somewhat guiltily delivered reply. "We seem to have lost it."

"Lost it? Lost it!" exploded the fury after a briefly impolite preamble. "You haven't any excuse whatever for losing that convoy, the port bow of which we are entirely responsible for."

"Yes, sir." This said in abashed acknowledgment of the rebuke.

"How do you know that every ship of our division is not being torpedoed at this very moment?"

"I think we'd be sure to know if they were, sir."

"You've no right to think anything but that it was your duty to keep your ship in station, and you haven't done it!"

"I think I can make out the tail end of it now, sir," replied the lieutenant, with the marine-glass at his eyes.

"It's at the port bow of the convoy we belong, not the tail end. See that you get there!"

"Very well, sir!" And the lieutenant signaled "full speed ahead" to the engine-room.

The approximate position of the lost convoy was known, of course, and it was soon made out and rejoined. But who would be prepared to deny that the "bawling out" received by a certain watch officer that morning, while it was not altogether without its amusing features, must ever cling to his memory as having been one of the most distressing incidents of his naval career?

*From a Painting by C. D. Robinson*

LYING IN WAIT

# CHAPTER XX

## THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

THE UNFORGETABLE APRIL 22ND—NAVIGATION BY MOONLIGHT OR IN DARKNESS EQUALLY DANGEROUS—DISCUSSING THE FIRST BATTLE—A DAY OF TARGET PRACTICE—ANOTHER ELUSIVE SUBMARINE.

THE night of April 21, and the first hours of the early morning of April 22, were especially calm and beautiful, and the convoy proceeded slowly under the light of a gorgeous moon, with almost every ship plainly visible. Suddenly, at 12:50 A.M. Lieutenant Armstrong, who was senior officer of the watch at the time, heard a loud explosion on the starboard quarter, then saw a huge volume of smoke and steam shoot into the air, this being followed by rapid gunfire from many vessels.

The "general-quarters" alarm was immediately sounded, and soon every man aboard was at his station ready to strike his blow of revenge and greatly relieved to feel that the first real engagement had actually begun. Gunner Jacobus instinctively knew that the depth charges would be the first weapons of offense to be used, and in considerably less time than is consumed in the recording of it had his men ready and waiting nervously at the launching gears.

Busy yeomen began to bring messages from the radio-room, and it was then learned that the British steamship *Dronning Maud* had been torpedoed and was in a sinking condition. Depth charges were again carefully inspected to make sure that the "pistols" were properly set for the depths required, while the gun crews were waiting on station ready to discharge their piercing projectiles at the word of command.

One depth charge was launched on the starboard side of the convoy—that being the calculated location of the submarine that had done the mischief—but no resultant upheaval of wreckage was seen, to the utter disgust not only of the now thoroughly excited Gunner Jacobus but the entire company of the ship.

For the benefit of the reader who may not have become informed as to the purpose and construction of the depth-charge "pistols"—which are the detonators of the three hundred pounds of T. N. T. in the big steel cylinders—a brief description is here given of these ingenious appliances, which bear no resemblance to the weapon from which they take their name. The "pistol" is a steel cylinder, approximately twelve inches long and five inches in diameter, and containing a pound of gun-cotton, with a detonating primer. This is inserted into one end of the larger cylinder, and when launched the pressure of the water upon a valvular mechanism of delicate construction discharges the primer when the required depth is reached, and this in turn explodes the main charge. The explosive power is effective within a radius of approximately one hundred yards, and the pistol must be timed with great care or the stern might easily be blown off of the vessel from which it is launched.

The *Venetia* held a position outside of the convoy, while H. M. S. *Heliotrope* and U. S. S. *Paducah* stood in

the direction of the sinking ship, which went down amid smoke and flames at 1:02 o'clock, in only a trifle over twelve minutes after having been struck. Fifty minutes later the squadron was again in station, minus the luckless *Dronning Maud*, and course was resumed toward near-by Bizerta.

During the early morning hours information came by radio that the two other vessels of the lost ship's division had fortunately fallen far behind the convoy or there might easily have been another similar calamity. It was also learned that the leading trawlers had saved the entire crew of the *Dronning Maud*, with the exception of one fireman, who was probably killed by the explosion, the torpedo having struck abreast of the engine space.

The *Venetia* on her course passed through the wreckage of the unfortunate Britisher, and when the moon went down upon the first taste of real war that had stirred the souls of her gallant company of patriotic Californians, one of them somewhat impiously remarked:

"Some Sunday morning picnic!"

On approaching Bizerta a large fleet of destroyers and trawlers came out to meet the squadron, partly, no doubt, to escort it into port, but primarily to note what damage had been done and get radio "close-ups" of the morning's excitement.

During the stay of one day in Bizerta, while a new convoy was being formed, and directions for the coming Gibraltar run were arrived at through conference between the commanders ashore, the *Venetia's* company killed time by exchanging yarns as to the happenings of the night before. Nearly every member of it set forth in more or less violent verbiage how he felt under fire,

what he would have done in a hand-to-hand combat with a Hun sailor on a U-boat's deck, and all of them had decided precisely what to do and how to feel on the next approach of a submarine, or following the unannounced explosion of a torpedo.

It was generally conceded, however, that no proper naval engagement could be fought in the darkness. Not only had it been demonstrated by the first experience that an engagement under those circumstances affords but small opportunity for sightseeing and the snapping of kodak pictures, but it reduces the proper management of the ships engaged almost to the zero point, to say nothing of the lack of opportunity for the men to serve properly the several implements of warfare to which their duties assign them, or, in other words, be "on their loco."

On the following morning an early start to the westward was made with a convoy of nine ships. The number of escorting vessels was increased by the addition of H. M. S. *Perdita*, with the *Venetia* in her now familiar station on the port bow. The run to Gibraltar was made under fair speed, but the dazzling moonlight of the nights, while making navigation and the preservation of regular formation comparatively simple matters, caused ever a keen sense of insecurity. Every vessel in the convoy must now prove an easier mark for those silent, sneaking murderers of the deep, whose periscopes it would be next to impossible to detect except when appearing close aboard under the strong rays of the searchlights. The first surprise had already fatefully verified the danger of moonlight runs, so no careful vigil was for a single moment relaxed, until Gibraltar was made again. Then, as a matter of course, everyone aboard the convoying vessels had something exciting to

relate during liberty ashore, albeit with surprising variations as to details, and but trifling attention paid to strict accuracy.

Captain Porterfield had again made up his mind that neither his armament nor the crews that handled it had quite reached that degree of proficiency he had been struggling for, so, after a Sunday spent in gun-sighting drill, the ship proceeded out to the Atlantic beyond Europa Point for target practice, a Canadian drifter having kindly consented (under orders) to tow a target out to sea.

The behavior of gun Number One again demonstrated that, as expressed by one of the gunners, "For the future One is my unlucky number and not Thirteen." On the first attempt at firing it, a cartridge-case exploded in the chamber and jammed fast, putting it out of business, temporarily at least. The other guns did better, but not sufficiently so to please the skipper, who with critical wrath assured the several crews that:

"You men might have hit a submarine if she happened to be within ramming distance, but you wouldn't have come within fifteen feet of her periscope, and that's her heart's blood!"

Better results were obtained, however, by the watch officers in automatic-pistol practice with floating cracker cans for targets, but the exhibition given by the men in charge of the machine-guns evoked a scornful laugh from the skipper. He declared with characteristic emphasis that a few automatics in capable hands, or even an encounter with bare knuckles, would be quite as effective man-killers in close quarters with a submarine on the surface. In the opinion of those most intimately concerned with the operation of the guns, however, a submarine would certainly have been struck, if not

sunk, by the three-inch guns, and there would have been few Germans on its deck who would not have been "shot full of holes." There also existed an impression to the effect that the skipper's remarks, plentifully tinctured as they were with the usual exaggerations of official displeasure, were a wise forerunner of what might be expected in the future if greater care were not shown in respect to marksmanship.

The return to Bizerta for the fifth time with a convoy of fourteen vessels, all told, was both wearing and discouraging, on account of the extreme darkness of the nights. Some impression of the inky blackness may be formed when it is said that the anxious watchers on the bridge could not see farther than perhaps a hundred feet ahead of the bow, and the anxiety became all the keener for the reason that the *Venetia* held what was known as the "fighting station" astern of the convoy, and would be held responsible for any approach of an enemy from that direction. Correct navigation under such circumstances, without even stars for guides, was almost out of the question, and now and then it was held to be absolutely necessary for the merchantmen to hang dim lanterns over their sterns for short periods, although, of course, it was more or less courting danger. Under such baffing circumstances all the ships kept "poor station," for there was scarcely any time at daybreak when more than three of the convoy were in sight, and occasionally there was none at all.

Fortunately, the return trip from Bizerta was begun under less distressing conditions, for the weather was clear, a brisk breeze from the north cooled the hot whiffs from the African coast, and the nights were as bright as should reasonably be expected of them, divested, as they were, of the light of *la bianca luna.*

Rumors had been circulated that a dirigible arriving on the morning of the *Venetia's* departure had reported submarines at several places along the line of this convoy route, and that a British steamer had been torpedoed, with the loss of many lives. Naturally then, everyone was again on the qui vive and smarting for another "scrap," which—in a diluted form, however—came very soon.

At 5:03 on that afternoon, with the small convoy of only six merchantmen, and more than that number of scouts and guard-vessels plainly in sight, a depth charge launched from one of the trawlers in advance exploded with an angry roar, and a column of water shot into the air. Captain Roper, on board U. S. S. *Cythera* (and commodore of the convoy), hoisted the signal "A," signifying that a submarine had been sighted, and "general quarters" was sounded. Nothing further was seen of it, however—at least on that day—and it was generally assumed that the depth charge from the trawler must either have damaged the "sub" or exploded so close to her as to compel her to submerge into safer waters.

There was hissing and sputtering in the radio-room, asking information from the vessels farthest in advance, and then silence as the operator received the replies in the telephones and transcribed them to paper. It was learned that a submarine had certainly been seen by the trawler close inboard, followed by the not-to-be-mistaken wake of a torpedo which barely missed the merchantman at which it had been directed. The trawler believed that she had sorely damaged the enemy or she must surely have been seen again. But claims of that nature—or at least the declarations of confident suspicion—are made with almost every launching of a depth charge, for it should be remembered that the true sailor must have

his repertory of yarns, and very often the barrenest detail is expanded into an exciting and apparently truthful history.

In line with this statement, it may be well to record here that one of the crew, who has preserved a diary, describes an attack upon the *Venetia* in which she had a narrow and most thrilling escape from destruction, but launched a large number of depth charges which beyond any doubt drove her assailant to the bottom. But since no occurrence so tremendously thrilling as this is mentioned under date of May 10, 1918, either in the ship's log or in the diary of the officer who permitted his to be read, the sailor's narrative may be dismissed with the assurance that its author would make a very excellent reporter for some openly professed yellow journal.

# CHAPTER XXI

## A SECOND NIGHT ATTACK

A FUSILLADE OF DEPTH CHARGES—FRENCH MERCHANTMAN TORPEDOED—"VENETIA" PREPARES FOR HAND-TO-HAND CONFLICT—ENEMY SUBMERGES TO AVOID RAMMING—A SUSPICIOUS SAIL.

A FEW hours later, however—to be exact, on May 11, 1918, at 3:39 A.M.—Ensign Mangan, who had the watch at the time, heard that telltale muffled report less than a mile distant, and saw a great column of water and spray spout fiercely from the port bow of the French steamer *Susette Fraissinet*, which soon lurched to starboard, indicating that she had been fatally struck. "General quarters" was quickly sounded, and in less than thirty seconds all hands were at their stations, many of them in uniforms quite "non reg," meaning, in navy parlance, that they were not properly attired. But sartorial adornment is a matter of small consequence when one is suddenly awakened by the piercing shriek of a call to "general quarters," and at that particular moment even the strictly ethical skipper would not have wasted even a critical glance if his executive officer had hurried to his station without any kind of shirt, which, in the absence of information as to the smaller details of the event, it may be easily imagined that he did.

In fact, memory has been recorded that there was even a more glaring instance of undress uniform during this excitement. It is related that at the time the paymaster was in the midst of a bath, and when the general alarm sounded he flew to his station on the bridge, still dripping, furnishing the unusual spectacle of a chief of lookouts directing operations, on a cold night, and clad only in a bathrobe and cap.

All eyes were now turned in the direction of the stricken *Susette Fraissinet*, which, in the glare of the well directed searchlights, it was easy to note was sinking slowly but with unerring certainty. There came another muffled report off to starboard, and, shortly thereafter, the sea-glasses detected that unmistakable surface disturbance that marks the wake of a torpedo, coming directly toward the *Venetia*. A sharp command, given in tones of great alarm, ordered the wheel put hard over to the left; the ship veered about quickly; Gunner Jacobus instinctively assembled his crew about the depth charges, and the long, snake-like ripple crossed the ship's bows at a distance of considerably less than one hundred fifty yards.

This statement is made upon the authority of an entry made in the official log; but the journal of one of the crew asserts, with apparently undebatable conviction, that the distance between the wake of the torpedo and the bow of the *Venetia* was surely not over fifteen feet, which takes the other extreme of estimate. There remained, nevertheless, not the slightest doubt that if the threatening approach had not been noted, the now splendidly thrilling career of Miss Venetia would have ended then and there.

Several nervous circles were made about the supposed location of the diver that had launched the torpedo, and

LET 'ER GO!

THE EXPLOSION

Jacobus dropped seven depth charges in quick succession. Three of them failed to explode, however, and in response to the scathing demand of the skipper to be informed as to their origin and manufacture, it was established that they were some of the "up-to-date" British "ash-cans" taken aboard at Gibraltar. On the other hand, the supposedly inferior ones brought from the United States exploded with terrific effect, and it was known that if the "sea-hound" had been within a hundred feet of one of them she would never again rise to the surface.

On one of these sleuthing circles the French trawler *Isolde* was noted standing by to rescue the crew of the *Susette Fraissinet*, who had taken to the life-boats none too soon, for she went down, bow first, at 4:12, thirty-three minutes after being struck. The sight was a peculiarly saddening one, and yet splendidly picturesque, as the great vessel throbbed out a sighing cloud of steam, and sank, looking like a tragic vignette in the midst of darkness, or quite resembling the theatrical effect of a mimic ship on a painted sea, sinking under the glare of the spot-light.

The *Venetia* continued her circling courses in search of the predatory monster of the deep, dropping depth charges at regular intervals, for, in the face of this fatal preparedness, it would not dare to rise to the surface. At 5:12 the stillness was broken by the inspiring cry from the lookout at the forward masthead:

"Submarine dead ahead, sir!"

There was no mistaking the accuracy of the alarm, for the submarine was plainly visible at a distance of from four to five miles, and heading directly for the convoy. Captain Porterfield himself telegraphed "full speed ahead" from the bridge, and the engines pulsed

and throbbed to the full extent of their power as the *Venetia* fairly tore forward "with a bone in her teeth." It was believed that the submarine must be disabled and compelled to remain on the surface, rendering probable a close-at-hand encounter with almost inevitable capture as its result.

The gun crews had been at their stations ever since the first alarm, but, in view of the long-awaited hand-to-hand encounter, all spare men were ordered on deck with rifles and ammunition, while officers carried their side arms, deadly automatics.

On the *Venetia* plunged, with every gun trained, nearing the apparently unsuspecting submarine by leaps and bounds through the black waters, at the same time keeping between the sun and the enemy, and with a French dirigible in plain view above, following in close pursuit.

As the enemy came nearer, a course was made to head him off, and Captain Porterfield had voiced his intentions of ramming him, should he permit the *Venetia* to approach within ramming distance, and then all hands would be expected to set to and capture his Hun personnel. But to the utter dismay of a valiant crew, armed to the teeth, the enemy proved that he was not badly disabled, for he submerged almost within rifle-shot, and on reaching the spot where he disappeared, eleven depth charges were launched in rapid succession, any of which must have destroyed him had he been anywhere near it. Unfortunately, however, no wreckage was seen to spring to the surface, nor even those telltale swirls of floating oil which are usually assumed to be sure indications that a submarine has been either badly damaged or utterly destroyed. Comparison of data, however, collected from different diaries, as well as from official

records, seems to indicate that this must have been a submarine which a few days later came to the surface in a damaged condition and was captured by a British destroyer.

Nothing was left now but a quick return to the convoy, which of course was nowhere in sight, but it must prove a simple matter to soon overhaul it on its way to Gibraltar. Proofs that the torpedoing of some vessel, of which the *Venetia's* company had not heard, must have occurred not long before, were encountered in hundreds of floating bales of cotton and the flotsam of wreckage that told all too plainly their tragic story. At 4:45 that afternoon the convoy was overhauled and the *Venetia* resumed her former place at the battle station. She had now earned a reputation as an efficient and ever-willing scout cruiser, ready at any moment to be dispatched upon some errand of investigation or attack, and had now become known as "The Bear-Cat," in addition to the more frivolous appellations of "The Painted Jezebel" and "The Siren of Babylon."

Double vigilance was signaled for all vessels, and it was ordered that in no circumstances must any ship display a light at night for any reason whatsoever. But the nervously constituted French skippers were often persistently culpable in the matter of the showing of momentary flashes for precaution's sake, and during the first night after rejoining the convoy, the *Venetia* was compelled to exact compliance with this order by firing warning rifle-shots at one of them whose navigator was evidently afraid of collision with another vessel following not far in his wake.

The next morning, no doubt because of many reports to the effect that submarines had been again ambushing their periscopes behind the sails of small craft—such as

fishing-boats and the like—Commodore Roper signaled to the *Venetia* from the *Cythera* to proceed ahead of the convoy and investigate a sail which had been detected moving about suspiciously along the western horizon. Accordingly, "full speed ahead" was telegraphed to the engine-room, and the suspicious little craft overhauled, to discover that she was only an inoffensive Spanish fisherman whose crew had frightened itself into a frenzy upon the aggressive approach of a stranger vessel of war.

Gibraltar was reached without further incident, and the *Venetia* had no sooner moored to her buoy than the liberty parties began to organize for the smaller excitements of shore pastimes, by way of pleasant contrast with the more strenuous activities of stalking for the wily "sea-wolves." With reference to these our old friend the Bermuda lily farmer had remarked that they were "twice as foolish as foxes, full of speed and never for a fight."

It now began to be quite self-evident that the line of distinction hitherto drawn between the men of the regular naval service and those of the Reserve Force had become almost entirely obliterated by the uniting influences of shoulder-to-shoulder conflict with a common enemy. There was now no difference between "land-gobs" and "water-gobs," "amachoores" and "profeshes," "tenderfeet" and "barnacles." All had been equally brave and reckless under the same compelling influences, and had responded with equal alacrity to the same commands. All were now alike, officers and enlisted men, in the service of the United States, with the same pride in her navy and the same indomitable courage in defense of her flag.

# CHAPTER XXII

## A SUCCESSION OF THRILLS

THE SIXTH DEPARTURE FOR BIZERTA—A DAYLIGHT ATTACK—APPARENT CERTAINTY THAT "VENETIA" BAGS HER FIRST SUBMARINE—A SURPRISE IN THE NIGHT AND THE SHIP ABANDONED—A COLLISION AND NOT A TORPEDO—"SOMETHING ON THE SKIPPER."

AT Gibraltar a squadron of merchantmen was already waiting for convoy, so no shore leave was granted, and, after the conference of commanders, preparations were made for an immediate return to the eastward. The morning of the sixteenth of May was occupied in exhaustive gun-pointing and "abandon-ship" drills, and at 5:22 in the afternoon moorings were cast off and the convoy assumed formation outside Europa Point.

As this sixth run to Bizerta proved to be one of extraordinary significance, a chart of the convoy is furnished for purposes of observation and record, since the *Venetia* then made her claim to the positive disabling of her first submarine, which was afterwards allowed by both the American and British governments, and resulted in the placing of a golden star upon her smoke-stack as the probable avenger of the *Lusitania*.

During the first night out, both the merchantmen and their protectors seemed more or less overstrung, both

THE FATEFUL CONVOY

by the memory of the exciting scenes of a few days before and by radio messages stating that on the previous day a British tramp steamer and an Italian destroyer had been torpedoed in the direct course then being taken by the convoy. It seemed as though every commander in it must be in conflict with some strong nervous tension or other, for the night was one of almost impenetrable darkness. The orders as to the showing of lights were more stringent than ever, and such poor formation was maintained that the appearance of dawn exhibited a convoy "scattered all over the Mediterranean," as the skipper remarked, and it was hours before the original formation could be resumed.

During the rest of the day the formation was as regular and as carefully preserved as though the convoy were engaged in a deliberately planned naval review. Each of the merchantmen plodded along slowly at a speed of seven knots, keeping as close alignment as a platoon of soldiers on the parade-ground, and apparently "guiding right and left" on their respective escorts. The sun reddened as it neared the horizon, growing more and more lurid until it seemed to pause and bathe in the clouds of gold and crimson that hung in wondrous splendor far astern. The sea was tinted with reflections from this blaze of color, and some of it fell upon the ships, from whose decks the ever-busy signalmen were wigwagging messages to and fro. Keen-eyed lookouts kept anxious watch from the crow's-nests, for that was one of the rigorous rules of war time; but everywhere the placid sea was instinct with the atmospheres of peace.

Then that picture of solemn silence was interrupted as suddenly and violently as a spinning top scatters the pins in a game of "Devil among the Tailors."

Ensign Howard had just relieved Lieutenant Mangan for dinner, and stood on the bridge scanning the convoy. Immediately in his line of vision came that unmistakable muffled explosion, and alongside the midship section of the steamer *Sculptor* there arose a column of water and black matter which for a moment almost obliterated the smoke-stack from view. The shot had evidently come from the *Venetia's* side of the convoy, and orders were shouted that were at once loud and contradictory.

"Wheel hard over left!" yelled Ensign Howard.

"What did you do that for?" roared Captain Porterfield. "Right! Hard over right!" and his hand swept the lever to the opposite side of the telegraphic dial. "What's your idea?"

"I thought the 'sub' must be over there, sir," was the reply.

"I think she's over there!" And the captain pointed in the opposite direction with the accustomed emphasis that often brought conviction to those who disagreed with him. "Steady, steady! Pass the word to stand by the guns! Stand by depth charges! Let 'em go!" And the *Venetia* surged on in the direction indicated, with Jacobus dropping the charges over the stern as rapidly as they could be launched with safety to the ship itself, which meant intervals of one hundred fifty feet.

The captain telegraphed "half speed," then "more bombs," and seven depth charges went over the stern and exploded with titanic force, within perhaps one hundred feet of each other, sending great spouts of water and spray high into the gathering night, and immediately over the spot where several pairs of piercing eyes had seen the periscope and conning-tower top of a submarine. At this point U. S. S. *Surveyor* suddenly appeared out of the night beyond and began launching depth charges in rapid succession. As closely as they could be enumerated from memory and the interchange of reminiscences, this vessel launched either two or three charges in practically the same water hitherto lashed into fury by the seven or more of the *Venetia*. This incident is recalled for the reason that Captain Pope of the *Surveyor* laid claim to a considerable share in the destruction or disabling of this submarine. Which of the two vessels deserves the greater share of the glory, however, will no doubt always remain a matter of conjecture or dispute, with the preponderance of evidence none the less largely in favor of the *Venetia*.

It was now too dark to distinguish the nature of such bits of wreckage as could be detected floating in the

THE WAKE OF A TORPEDO

THE STRICKEN "SCULPTOR"

waves, and all hands looked in vain for the telltale black swirls of oil. But it seemed to all on board that some one of the charges must have found its mark, and in the soul of each one of them came the prayerful query:

"Has the *Lusitania* been avenged?"

All attention was now directed toward the torpedoed *Sculptor*, which did not seem to be in danger of sinking immediately, although very low in the water, indicating that she was leaking badly. The trawler *Corvi* stood close by her, engaged in rescuing her crew from the boats, for all hands had now deserted her. One of her life-boats had been blown to pieces in the explosion, and the men who should have taken refuge in it had leaped overboard in their frenzy, and were being rescued by submarine chaser 350. Another was swamped in the lowering of it, and the occupants floundered about in the black waters, shouting for help, and swimming for their lives, or clinging to bits of wreckage from the disabled *Sculptor*. Many were saved by the trawler *Isolde*, and the *Venetia* stood by to render all possible assistance. The work was extremely hazardous on account of the darkness, to say nothing of the danger of collision with the vessels engaged in responding to calls from the poor fellows to be rescued. Ensign Howard, in speaking of this work of rescue, says:

"It was all very exciting because of the ever-present danger to the ship; but of course it was impossible to let the poor Britishers drown like so many sheep. I shall never forget the appearance of one of them swimming fiercely toward a large piece of wreckage as we stood by to throw life-lines to such of those as we might be able to reach. He was a huge, raw-boned, powerful fellow, and was swimming so fast, hand over hand, that his body appeared to be half out of the water. I felt a real

thrill of joyous admiration when he was saved, as, in fact, all of the rest were, without the loss of a single man. The *Isolde* had some of them, and the *Corvi* reported the rescue of ten, including the *Sculptor's* captain and most of the officers. We were ordered to stand by the torpedoed ship, with the *Corvi*, for although she was very low in the water, she did not appear to be in immediate danger of sinking."

The whereabouts of the remainder of the convoy was of course a matter of pure speculation, and it was generally conceded that if submarines were as numerous in those waters as our experiences of the fore part of the night would seem to indicate, it was quite likely that more of the merchantmen had been sent to the bottom.

The *Venetia* stood off and on, then circled about the luckless *Sculptor*, the intention being to save her valuable cargo by having her towed into port in case she should still be floating on the approach of daylight.

The night was now comparatively calm, although one of inky blackness. All except those in the routine watches were sleeping off the fatigues of the later watches of yesterday and the early ones of to-day, or discussing them in the wardroom and forecastle. Suddenly, and of course without warning, in the absence of any light or other identifying signal that could be seen, the trawler *Corvi* loomed out of the darkness and drizzle, dead ahead of the *Venetia*, and standing directly across her bow. Lieutenant Armstrong, who had the watch at the time, immediately put his helm "hard over right" and stopped the engines, which, fortunately enough, had already been slowed down to one hundred revolutions. If the trawler had taken a corresponding precaution, there would have been no mishap; but he put his wheel to the left, and the *Venetia* struck him full in

the side, just forward of the foremast, her bowsprit stub fetching up on his port gun-platform, almost sweeping it from the deck.

Immediately all was confusion on board of the *Venetia*, with passages and companionways choked with officers and men struggling to reach the deck. Captain Porterfield, suddenly startled from a stolen rest in the chart-room, thought of nothing else but that the ship had been torpedoed, and hurried to the deck. Lieutenant Armstrong from the bridge frantically tried to shout the correct information to the captain above the din of voices and confusion of orders, but this he failed to hear. Then, believing that of course the *Venetia* had received a mortal blow, above the din rang out his loud voice of authority that must not be disputed:

"All—hands—abandon—ship!"

The value of the numerous "abandon-ship" drills now became palpably apparent, for the boats were immediately lowered, and all hands began sliding down the falls into them in good order and without the slightest show of undue excitement. It was now seen that the roster of the *Venetia's* company had been increased by one seaman. The trawler's cook, a man named Williams, who had no doubt been stationed on his ship's gun-platform lookout, jumped to the *Venetia's* forecastle deck and joined his suddenly acquired new acquaintances in the scramble for the life-boats. These were soon filled, the various officers taking their proper stations in the sterns, and began to move away from the supposedly surely sinking *Venetia*. As, however, the ship showed no sign whatever that she was in a sinking condition, or in the least danger of it, Captain Porterfield ordered all hands aboard again, and then for the first time discovered that there had been only a not very damaging

collision instead of a torpedo attack. It has not been recorded that he made any attempt to excuse or explain his part in the misadventure, further than to remark quietly that it had been "a devilish good drill." But all hands off watch went to bed, those possessed of a sense of humor wondering who it was that thought it would be a good joke to "put one over on the old man."

The only damage sustained by the *Venetia* was the splitting of the bowsprit stump, the carrying away of the foretopmast stay, the beading leading to the figurehead torn away on the starboard side, and some of the stem plates crushed in sufficiently to cause a leak that flooded the forepeak compartment. As soon as the confusion had subsided, communication with the trawler's commander elicited the information that his damage was comparatively slight, but he would feel indeed grateful if Captain Porterfield could assume the care of his passenger survivors, as his confined living quarters were sadly congested.

As a commendable recompense for the damage inflicted by the *Venetia's* sturdy stem upon the far weaker trawler, Captain Porterfield courteously granted the request, and after some delay the trawler's overplus of unbidden guests was taken aboard. These included Captain Ward, First Officer Dowling, Second Officer Milestone, Third Engineer Graham, Fourth Engineer Edwards, Gunner Child, and three seamen. The mess attendants were ordered to "break out" coffee and sandwiches, after which the officers were made at least partially comfortable in the officers' quarters, while the seamen were stowed away in the forecastle, there to remain until they could be finally disposed of by a duly accredited relief-ship.

In the meantime it had been noticed that the *Sculptor*

had settled no farther in the water, so a radio message was sent out calling for a tug to tow her into port, for she carried a valuable cargo of munitions of war.

Such of the junior officers as have been interviewed as to this truly exciting but, after all, somewhat ludicrous espisode, have manifested a commendably loyal unwillingness either to discuss the incident or even comment upon it. In point of fact, such statements as have been made were considerably lessened in value by some palpable mental reservations, which prevent the chronicler from being as accurate as he otherwise might be.

Be it said, however, that this considerately loyal attitude on the part of the wardroom youngsters is strongly to be commended. To quote one of them, there was not an "Annapolis man in the whole bunch," and as their lack of actual experience had often been subjected to much caustic criticism on the part of their commander, it is only fair to assume that they would welcome any opportunity to make retorts in kind.

But this none of them considered it either ethical or politic to do, so the aforesaid chronicler can merely venture the impression that the consensus of wardroom opinion was certainly to the effect that their virtue had received its own reward as far as the skipper was officially concerned.

# CHAPTER XXIII

## THE AFTERMATH OF BATTLE

A SEARCH FOR THE SCATTERED CONVOY—ANOTHER VICTIM OF THE ATTACK—AN INTRUSION INTO NEUTRAL WATERS—FRESNO RAISINS AND THE MALAGA BRAND—RUMORS OF FRESHER DUTIES.

THE dawning of another day developed the welcome news that the valuable cargo of munitions carried by S. S. *Sculptor* was probably safe and would eventually be employed in the final discomfiture of the now surely wavering foe. The vessel was still afloat, and had not perceptibly lessened her freeboard during the night. The *Corvi*, *Isolde*, and *Venetia* were still standing by holding careful watch over her until such time as the salvaging tug radioed for should arrive, so that the guard-ships might return to their convoy, which, naturally enough, was nowhere in sight.

At 4:55 a tug was sighted headed for the squadron of guard-ships and their disabled charge at full speed. This proved to be the French tug *Canard*, and as soon as the rescued officers and crew of the *Sculptor* could be shifted aboard of her, she took the sorry-looking cripple in tow escorted by the trawler *Corvi*, and the *Venetia*, under full speed, set out in search of the lost convoy, followed by the *Isolde*.

After a run of two hours a merchantman in a sinking condition was sighted ahead, and proved to be the British S. S. *Mavisbrook*, which had been torpedoed in the attack of the previous night. As a trawler was standing by her no stop was made, and two hours later the radioman received the news that she had gone down bow first, carrying with her a great cargo of sadly needed provisions.

The lost convoy was overhauled shortly after 4 o'clock that afternoon, and when messages had been sent and answered, it was learned that the S. S. *Whatley Hall* had also been torpedoed the night before, and sank in less than one minute and a half with all on board, making the unusual number of three victims in a single attack upon a convoy. It seemed then all too evident that there must have been two or more submarines in that attack, for there now remained not the slightest doubt in the minds of the ship's company that the *Sculptor's* assailant had been utterly disabled if not totally destroyed by the *Venetia's* terrific onslaught of depth charges in spite of the participation of the vessel named in the preceding chapter.

Many mute evidences of that fierce battle displayed upon the calm surface of the Mediterranean were passed that afternoon, in the way of floating bodies, empty lifeboats and rafts, and acre upon acre of wreckage and buoyant cargo. The *Venetia* wended her silent course through them, like a grim and seasoned heroine of naval warfare, manned by a crew of young men, every one of them now believing himself to be a hardened veteran, long accustomed to such gruesome sights.

So wended toward Bizerta what was left of the stately convoy that had passed through the Strait of Gibraltar only a few days before, apparently so closely surrounded

by vessels of war as to render the destruction of any part of it next to impossible. But it is safe to say of submarine warfare that, although its failure to break the German blockade was certainly established, its torpedoes might easily wreak destruction through a line of protecting vessels if they formed a cordon about a convoy, almost with stems lashed to sterns.

A few days later Ensign Nicolini, who, it will be remembered, had been transferred from the *Venetia* to the *Surveyor*, came aboard for dinner at Gibraltar, and related his experiences during the last destructive encounter with the enemy divers. He dwelt particularly upon the harrowing fate of the S. S. *Whatley Hall*, which, he said, had so depressed him that the struggle against unstrung nerves had lasted for several days. His vessel was not far distant when the ill-fated vessel was struck, and the destroying torpedo had exploded in so vulnerable a spot that it seemed certainly not more than two minutes before she went down, leaving all of her crew struggling in the water, their cries for help piercing the night in tones of heart-breaking anguish that he will never forget. The flagship at the time was proceeding under full speed toward where another submarine had been reported, and lest other ships ahead be destroyed, Commander Pope was compelled to drive his ship through the mass of struggling martyrs to German avarice and leave them to their fate.

But this was one of the distressing necessities of war which could be neither corrected nor avoided; for its laws are implacable and demand that the saving of millions of dollars in property value must be given consideration beyond so small an eventuality as the saving of a handful of human lives. Humanitarianism would naturally adopt a more merciful process of reasoning,

but perhaps it should be remembered that in saving these lives many more might have been endangered, and moreover, mercy and pity are elements that seldom enter into the ethics of warfare.

The night before arriving at Bizerta, during the first watch, a hospital-ship was sighted, which, as the officer on watch at the time expressed it, was lit up like Broadway. In spite of his knowledge that Germany had agreed not to sink hospital-ships, his first impulse was to signal the stranger that there were submarines close by, and she should extinguish her blaze of light, since he had serious doubts of the sincerity of the promise. On second thought, however, he concluded that such warnings were not in his line of duty; and then again, his lack of trust in German promises might not be shared by the captain of the illuminated ship, which passed by evidently in full confidence that she was not in the slightest danger.

On arrival in Sebra Bay it was learned that the stay there would be of short duration. Accordingly, liberty parties began at once to hurry to the "Beach," for after the harrowing excitements of the last run from Gibraltar the crew certainly merited relaxation and excitement of a less enervating nature. There were dinners ashore and nearly all of the livery conveyances were commandeered for trips to near-by villages. But there were no stories of interesting episodes, and much dissatisfaction was expressed over the war-time rule that all cafés must close at 10:30 P.M. One of the men, probably to show his utter contempt for French law, decided to make a law unto himself, which should apply to his ship as well, notwithstanding navy regulation in respect to beverages containing what is familiarly known as a "punch." This lack of foresight resulted in his being

"called to the mast" the next morning and punished for bringing liquor aboard.

That afternoon the now veteran vessels of war and the accompanying trawlers and tugs steamed again for Gibraltar in charge of a convoy of nine merchantmen. That day and the next were quite eventless, but on the following morning a floating body wearing a life-belt recalled the loss of the three ships torpedoed on the eastward cruise, and visualized the sad fate of somebody's husband, son, or father whose final sepulchre would ever remain among the unfathomable mysteries of history's greatest war. Many such gruesome sights as this had been passed before, but about this one there seemed to hang an atmosphere of peculiar sadness. The poor fellow, suddenly aroused from a restless sleep, had probably been given ample time in which to prepare for his final struggle with death, and lashed a life-belt about his body before his ship went down leaving him alone in a sea shrouded in darkness. He felt certain, no doubt, that with the dawning of another day relief would come; only to find himself alone and deserted, through many hours of languishing and despairing, until exposure and starvation had done their work.

That afternoon a message came from Captain Roper directing that the *Venetia* should come at once within hailing distance of the flagship *Cythera*. "Full speed ahead" was ordered, and on the way to the head of the convoy there were many speculations as to the possible motive for the hurried call. It was of course hoped by all on board that some mission of great importance might be in store for them, and the more exciting and dangerous the better. Fulfillment of this hope seemed extremely probable when it was learned from the senior officer of the convoy that a trawler ahead had sighted a

"FULL SPEED AHEAD!"

THE REASON WHY

submarine approaching it about five miles distant, and he had selected the *Venetia* to proceed in the direction indicated and earn, if possible, the long-sought-for glory of attacking a submarine single-handed and capturing or destroying it under circumstances that would admit of no possible dispute.

The "bone in her teeth" again appeared below her sharp cutwater as she surged forward and left in her wake glittering evidences of pride in having been selected for so important a duty. But her eagerly expectant crew was again doomed to disappointment, for, after zigzagging on many courses for several hours, no submarine or wake of one was made out. Instead, an innocent fishing-smack that scurried off toward the African coast on her approach made it all too evident that the imaginative eyesight of the lookout on a nervous trawler had taken her little stump of a mast for a periscope.

On resuming position off the starboard quarter of the convoy, it was discovered that its course had been altered and it was headed northwesterly toward the Spanish coast. Warnings had been received from Gibraltar concerning the presence of submarines in the open sea, and it had been decided to direct the convoy to proceed at once into neutral waters within the three-mile limit, where attacks would not be permissible under international law. Of course the commodore knew very well that his convoy had no business there and so had the officials who had issued the order. But as there was a clear course ahead and no "traffic cop" in sight, it had been decided to test the vigilance of the Spanish gunboats as a precautionary measure, in view of the fact that no less than three ships had been lost from the preceding convoy.

The progress was now regular and the stations of the various ships maintained with an entire absence of nervous navigation, for they were in a neutral zone where no submarine was likely to intrude. The rule of darkened ships at night, however, was strictly enforced, not because of any fear of the approach of an enemy, but it was obviously wiser to avoid interference on the part of police boats from sunny Castillia. It was related that on one occasion the eagle eye of the skipper of the *Surveyor* detected a glimmering light hanging over the stern of one of the merchantmen. "Full speed ahead" was ordered, and upon coming within megaphone hailing distance the malefactor was assailed by the voice of angered authority: "Put out that light!" Then came a somewhat gloating reply through the darkness: "All right! But you put out the three lights you're showing yourself!"

There appeared to be a sense of security on this quiet course along the picturesque coast of southern Spain, which was a decided relief from the other U-boat-infested zones farther on out of sight of land. During this whole balmy summer's day the convoy moved in certain security, almost "on the beach," and marine-glasses and kodaks were plentiful along the shore side, viewing or snapping the panorama stretched out before them; novel because it was entirely new to nearly every-one aboard. Tall, beetling mountains, purpled in the warm haze, with the outlines of little villages and villas, dotting the perspective almost up to their topmost peaks; rocky promontories nearer by, with ruined and modern castles on the sunny sides of them, while, on their summits, silhouetted against the distant purples, were the ruins of the castles of history, and well pre-served watch towers erected by the ancient Moors in

their conquest of Granada. Along the coast the atmosphere, while even a trifle warmer than the temperature of California's Southland, was remarkably clear, and excellent views were obtained of the cities of old Cartagena and Malaga, of raisin fame, whose reputation has been somewhat tarnished, if not dangerously vitiated, by the vineyard products of Fresno and Tulare.

At mess that afternoon, one or two of the youngsters interchanged remarks touching upon the superiority of the raisin as produced in the valley of the San Joaquin, in the hearing of a non-Californian. He unhesitatingly declared that there was no raisin in the world that could approach the Malaga brand. Wardroom ethics of course forbade the precipitation of a dispute between a senior officer and his juniors, and furthermore, since this conviction was somewhat clinched by the fact that at the time the senior was passing Fresno raisins from his plate to his mouth, the Californians quietly held to their opinions and inwardly pitied the disputant because he did not know the "Golden State" as well as they did.

Just before sunset the mighty Rock of Gibraltar appeared silhouetted against the western sky bathed in golds and purples, while its frowning outlines reflected on a truly glassy sea. Then out of the distance loomed the familiar form of the old U. S. gunboat *Machias*, easily familiar owing to her unbeautiful model and antique design. She was proceeding eastward under full speed, and signaled that she had been sent under hurry orders to assist an Ally vessel off the beach beyond Malaga. Doubtless this was for the purpose of getting the stranded ship afloat and on her way before she could be surprised by the Spanish marine traffic squad and interned, or else marooned and relieved of her cargo by I. W. W. bands (rumor having located two or three

varieties of them among the remoter stretches of this rocky coast).

The harbor of Gibraltar was entered at 8:30 P.M.; batteries were unloaded and the ammunition stored away; pistol primers were removed from the depth charges and the canvas covers lashed tightly over them; then the ship picked up a buoy and moored instead of tying up to a dock as before. The celerity with which these routine functions were carried out created in the minds of the more inquisitive ones considerable speculation as to what new duty was in store for the *Venetia*. That there was to be a change of some kind seemed to be the prevailing "hunch" among all the uninformed, but all speculative discussion was terminated by the appearance of the familiar leather bag marked "U. S. M." and in addition it was noised about that a court of inquiry was to be held ashore, obviously, it was generally believed, to determine who should receive first honors in the records of the recent encounters with submarines.

# CHAPTER XXIV

## HAS THE "LUSITANIA" BEEN AVENGED?

LETTERS FROM HOME—A BOARD OF INQUIRY CONCERNING THE RECENT BATTLES—PREPONDERANCE OF EVIDENCE IN FAVOR OF "VENETIA"—A SCOUTING CRUISE TO THE AZORES.

IN the regular service the receipt of letters from home has long since been relegated to a place on the list of matters embracing the ordinary functions of routine. There is, of course, a sentimental side to it which clothes it with a glamour always absent from the more technical happenings; but the experienced mariner has been schooled into a sort of semi-indifference with reference to correspondence, and he receives his letters in his usual happy-go-lucky way, glad to receive them when they come, but never quite disappointed when they do not. Homesickness has been trained out of him by the hard knocks and sometimes grueling routine of his busy calling, and if there should come at any time a mild attact of that depressing malady, it is usually obliterated from his system by association with the new acquaintances formed during liberty ashore.

With the Naval Reserve man, however, it is quite a different matter. The appearance of the orderly coming up the gangway with the mail-bag is an incident quite

paramount to any other connected with life aboard ship. In point of fact it is only a trifling exaggeration to venture the opinion that he would almost open a letter from home during an engagement, and read it with one eye while pointing a gun with the other.

Suddenly called into the service of his country, albeit he enters the ceaseless grind of rapid preparation without complaint, he almost invariably carries with him the blessed influences of the home he has left behind, and if there be little ones there, his loneliness is all the harder to bear as he dreams of them on his comfortless cot in the long barrack-room or forecastle. Then the sense of desolation is all the keener amid the dangers of war zones, where at any moment there may come the sudden taking off that shall remove him forever from the happy fireside he has created with the energy of youth and under the inspiration of love.

The Department of the Navy is generally most solicitous in its efforts to secure as prompt delivery of mail to the men in the service as is reasonably possible, and a small army of clerks is employed to see that it is promptly dispatched to its proper destination. But the remoteness of stations, as well as the difficulty of securing adequate transportation for the precious leathern bags—especially in war times—often occasions unavoidable delay and as a matter of course sharp criticism of department methods, which is about as often unmerited as it is deserved.

Criticisms of this nature were certainly almost as numerous as names on the roster of the ship's company when the letters from far-off California arrived on this twenty-seventh day of May, 1918. Some of them had been months on the way, and arrived on the same date as others written but a few short weeks before. Natu-

rally then allusions to the lax methods of the Postmaster General were generally qualified by profane phrases, the makers of them being unconscious that the delays were due to no personal neglect on his part.

The scene that follows the delivery of a liberal installment of mail matter on the decks and in the passageways of a war-vessel at anchor is truly an inspiring one, and only the time-barnacled old salt who perhaps has never received a letter during his entire term of service can fail to be tenderly moved by it. Such a scene was touchingly enacted on this particular evening, with the *Venetia's* deck in the foreground, the illuminated ships and town in the middle distance, and the mighty "Rock" standing out boldly against a sky that was purpling under the influence of the approaching night.

Under each electric light there was gathered a group reading letters from dear ones, save where here and there, in a remote dimly lighted corner, someone who did not care to expose to others his feelings of joy or sorrow read his epistle in solitude over and over again. Some of the letters were from pals telling of merry happenings in the old town, and these were read by the fortunate recipients to little knots of those whom the mail had seemed to have forgotten; others were from children, and the proud fathers seldom failed to demonstrate to their near-by shipmates what precocious little ones they had sired. Some bore tidings of joy that radiated in the countenances of those who read them; some were messages of evil and sent the readers below with clouded faces; a muffled sob from some poor boy whose home death had visited either drove his neighbors from his reading light in pitying silence or brought to him a boon companion to learn the truth and speak the words of consolation that friendship always has to offer.

And so progressed this ever-shifting scene of mirth to sadness, of joy to sorrow, of happy pride to utter desolation, until "Taps" came, and homesickness spread in depressing silence among the lonesome ones who peopled the *Venetia's* sleeping-places.

The following afternoon, in the schoolhouse, where were always held such conferences as had to do with convoy matters, a board of inquiry assembled to collect such evidence as was attainable with reference to the submarine attacks of the 11th and 17th of May. Consideration of the events of the former date was in the nature of a review of evidence already recorded, but those of the 17th and 18th had not yet been presented in conference, and were now subjected to the most rigid and searching investigation. All of the commanders, as well as the deck officers on watch at the time of the attacks, were present, as were also Sir Rupert Miles, the British naval commander at Gibraltar, and Admiral Niblack, officer in command of the U. S. forces in those waters, as well as the several gunners who had launched the depth charges.

While, speaking exactly, there had come as yet no strictly official information with reference to the events of those stirring days, rumor had been more than usually active, and several Spanish press dispatches, republished in Gibraltar, added enough of the color of truth to them to make them worthy of official inquiry. These dispatches were to the effect that on May 19 two German submarines had limped into the port of Cartagena, both seriously damaged and one of them merely floating beyond all hope of reconstruction. The two vessels and their officers and crews were immediately interned, and, pending a more complete inquiry by the properly appointed authorities, the following facts were elicited:

On the night of the 17th and the early morning of the 18th, both of the submarines had been operating against the same convoy, and the torpedoing of the ships *Whatley Hall*, *Mavisbrook*, and *Sculptor* was acknowledged. The informant had given especial prominence to the attack on the *Sculptor*, and it was learned that the now almost destroyed submarine had doubtless sent the torpedo into her. It was told that after the explosion close aboard of her of seven depth charges, launched in rapid succession "from a gaily camouflaged yacht," she was discovered to be in an almost sinking condition and hurried to the nearest port.

Captain Pope of the U. S. S. *Surveyor* claimed to have launched depth charges in the same waters, the roars of some of them immediately following those from the *Venetia*. The claim was made that, in the absence of positive proof, the *Surveyor* should be accredited as having been at least a partial destroyer of one or both of the submarines interned at Cartagena.

The identity of neither of them had as yet been disclosed in the newspaper dispatches, and, in the light of conflicting claims, no positive decision could be rendered by the present board of inquiry. The consensus of opinion among the senior officers, however, seemed to be that, while the *Surveyor* was apparently the avenger of the unfortunate *Mavisbrook*, it was the seven charges from the *Venetia* that had sent the destroyer of the now salvaged *Sculptor* hopelessly disabled into Cartagena.

At all events, Captain Porterfield expressed himself as being practically certain of it, Admiral Niblack specifically coincided with him, and, while the British admiral was noncommittal, it was believed that had it been necessary to render a report then and there, it would have been largely to the credit of the *Venetia*.

There was no discount of any kind placed upon the proceedings of this board, however, when spread about the justly proud little ship that in peace times hailed from San Diego. The somewhat uncertain and indefinite opinion of the board as to which vessel had been the avenger of the *Sculptor* was argued and deduced into positive fact. Then, no doubt moved by the spirit of exaggeration that always follows victory, both in ward-room and forecastle, beginning with the apparent conviction of the skipper himself, there seemed to exist a profound belief that at last the *Lusitania* was avenged.

The number of one of the interned submarines had been variously reported as being U-69 and other numbers containing the numeral 9. So by due process of sailor deduction it was decided that, owing to a telegraphic error in the transmission of the identification number, the true one was not given; hence the battered sub, now forever out of commission in the harbor of Cartagena, must be none other than U-39, the alleged perpetrator of the crime that furnished the most popular reason for a declaration of war upon Germany by Uncle Sam.

It was learned that the identity of the interned U-boats would of course soon be officially established, and a golden star placed on the funnel of such vessel or vessels as might be decided to be responsible for their destruction. But the *Venetia* boys had already decided that question for themselves. Nearly every one of them believed himself a duly accredited avenger of the *Lusitania*, with a self-bestowed golden star—figuratively at least—pinned to his service stripe, and no board of inquiry should ever remove it.

Corroboration of these events that would have taken the beliefs of the *Venetia's* body of avengers out of the

realm of doubt became suddenly postponed by the information that a scouting trip was to be made to the Azores and return. Within five days she was duly fueled and provisioned for the voyage and departed in company of a six-knot motor-ship, the *Charles Braley*, and carrying one hundred thirty-seven bags of mail for our boys at Ponta Delgada, together with a large quantity of naval stores.

Until the last hour or two before heading westward, upon a voyage that seemed quite like a yachting trip in comparison with what the springtime experiences had been, there had existed a spirit of elation in every part of the ship. These scouting and observation trips had been for some time of monthly occurrence, and were a pleasant relief from the occasionally exciting but generally monotonous business of convoying. But now, instead of proudly assisting in the protection of great merchantmen and freighters, the *Venetia* was arbitrarily directed to forego the pleasure of testing her speed in a trial trip to Ponta Delgada and return, and take under her protecting wing for many days a six-knot ship, which was a gait from one to three knots slower than any of the Bizerta-Gibraltar convoys had been.

"But sailors supposes and commanders disposes," as the lily farmer philosophized, glancing aft at the speedless *Charles Braley*. "This disappointment reminds me of a play I saw once, in the Bohemian Club, that was called 'Sherman Said a Mouthful!'" And on the following morning, when it was noticed that the *Venetia* was astern of her convoy, he again remarked: "I wonder if the skipper thinks he can drive that craft along any faster by pushing her from behind."

# CHAPTER XXV

## INTERESTING DIVERGENCIES

A PASSENGER FOR THE AZORES—A QUICK RETURN TO GIBRALTAR—AN EXPERIENCE IN COLONIAL CHURCH ENGLISH—IN MOURNING FOR A DULL FOURTH OF JULY.

A PLEASING relief from the well known monotony of looking across the table at the same faces three times a day was the addition to the wardroom personnel, as a passenger to Ponta Delgada, of Lieutenant Commander I. C. Van de Carr. A most agreeable shipmate, an interesting mess companion, and even more attractive at that other table oftentimes devoted to that particular pastime of chance and skill which Hoyle always insisted was the American national game, and the most alluring one ever played with cards. Everyone who affects this game—either for pastime or gain—has a notion that he can play it "just a shade better" than anyone else about the board, and naturally the lieutenant was no exception. But he proved to be a most affable loser, and when he won he would draw down the pot with a halting motion and an expression of regret that greatly softened the discomfiture of those who held the poorer hands or did not know how to bluff.

Nearly a week was consumed on the outward voyage

on account of the exasperating slowness of the *Charles Braley*. It was without incident or excitement, other than that above touched upon, except that every one of the many vessels passed was suspected to be an enemy until its identification signal was displayed, and absolute qualms of regret were plentiful whenever the little flags of friendship fluttered from their halliards.

The *Venetia* boys, be it remembered, had had their initiation into several degrees of actual warfare; they liked it because it was what they had enlisted for; and there were precious few of them who did not resent to some extent the fact that the "Bear-Cat" was, for this trip at least, nothing but a passenger, mail, and freight carrier, to say nothing of the companionship of "Charley," who could neither be led nor driven into a speed greater than six knots.

But, being in a well known war zone, there was ever present the probability of a surprise, and for this the usual preparedness was strictly preserved. There was the stringently-adhered-to safeguard of no lights at night, the guns were kept always loaded, and the detonating pistols for the depth charges were seated although set on "Safety."

San Miguel Island was sighted in the early morning, and at daylight the *Venetia* was welcomed and escorted into Ponta Delgada by two American seaplanes, which circled speedily above and about her in graceful dips and curves until harbor was reached and she anchored behind the breakwater that had sheltered her when she was only a modest neophyte in warfare.

Lieutenant Commander Van de Carr was regretfully escorted over the side; Captain Porterfield departed with him, for the usual perfunctory call on Admiral Dunn, U. S. N.; officers off watch prepared to stretch

their legs on dry land; and liberty parties formed a line before the executive's office, ostensibly to perform the usual functions of the jacky ashore, but principally to commendably brag of their experiences in bagging U-boats in the Mediterranean.

It was remarked, however, that now Ponta Delgada did not offer the entertainment or amusement of larger ports farther to the east. The officers reported that, after their walks, inspecting places of supposed interest which they had not visited before, they had found the cafés quiet, the clubs dull, and so had come back aboard to turn in, write letters, or make brief entries in their diaries. That the men had not secured their usual relaxation of spirit this time in Ponta Delgada was evidenced by the early hours kept by the liberty parties and the almost negligible number of offenders "called to the mast" in the morning.

Shortly after arrival Captain Porterfield had intimated that the *Venetia* had been scheduled for a pleasant side trip to Madeira, which is always an interesting recreation ground for the pleasure-seeking mariner. But after three days at anchor information was passed about that this order had been revoked, and the *Venetia* was to return at once to Gibraltar as convoying vessel to the American steamers *J. L. Luckenbach* and *James Connelly*.

The departure was effected without further ceremony than the taking on of stores and mail, and the transfer to the *Luckenbach*, for temporary duty, of an expert signalman, she having none on board. That night the *James Connelly* signaled that her steering engines had broken down, and, after an elaborate flashing of signals, it was decided that she must return to port, leaving the *Venetia* and *Luckenbach* to proceed together.

The captain told of many apparently well grounded rumors of the operations of submarines between the Azores and "Gib," and instituted a system of zigzagging that was tiresome to the idlers and confusing to the navigators, although no doubt quite necessary as a precautionary measure. This comprised a course of twenty minutes on one bow, then a sudden turn for the same space of time on the other bow, with the *Luckenbach* following nervously, the two forming a picture which one of the critical loungers jocularly described as looking for all the world "like a hen chasing grasshoppers, with her one chicken following her and neither catching anything."

This zigzagging continued day and night without interruption, which made the keeping of company with the convoy an exceedingly difficult matter, owing to the confusing camouflage of the *Luckenbach*, which rendered it almost impossible to determine the course she was steering within twenty-five or thirty degrees.

After four days of what one of the ship's wags called "weary wiggling," a British destroyer appeared, coming from the eastward, and reported that she had been sent out as added protection to the *Luckenbach*, submarines having been active in these waters for several days past. But the *Venetia's* crew heaved sighs of regret rather than relief when Gibraltar was reached without any incident that was not entirely peaceful, save for the inevitable police court ceremonies, as some of the landsmen called them, that are almost invariably held "at the mast" within a day or two after leaving port, for the disciplining or punishment of enlisted men for infractions of regulations during liberty ashore.

After a brief stay of twenty-four hours in Gibraltar, the *Venetia*, H. M. S. *Iolanda*, and U. S. S. *Lydonia*,

with two French trawlers, acted as escort to a convoy of twelve ships bound for Bizerta. The trip was without incident, save that late one afternoon the signal flag "B," meaning "general quarters," was signaled from the *Lydonia*, and every station on the ship was manned for immediate action. But almost as suddenly the excitement faded away with the hauling down of the signal—meaning "nothing doing this time"—and although the radioman held the telephones to his ears for some time waiting for an explanation of this action, none came, either then or at any other time.

Some amusement, rather than excitement, however, was created that night, when two rifle-shots were fired at a French merchantman who continued the displaying of a light in spite of the usual warning, causing shouts of laughter at the rapidity with which the offender again shrouded himself in darkness. It had been found that often a merchantman would persist in displaying a light, perhaps in the hope that he might escape detection; but a rifle-ball or two whistling through his lower rigging never failed to be a most effective rebuke that was never disregarded.

Bizerta was reached within the usual space of time, and on the following day the same escorting vessels, with the exception of the two trawlers, headed again for the westward, with a convoy of twelve ships, nothing of interest having happened, except the laying in of an unusual store of fresh eggs, the high-cost-of-living notions not having apparently yet affected the fecundity of the Bizerta hens nor the profiteering instincts of their owners. The return to Gibraltar was more than usually eventless, for, aside from the usual monotonous zig-zagging by day and the changing of course occasionally to order the "dousing" of surreptitious "glims" at

night, the *Venetia* had nothing to do but to fly after a suspicious sail upon signal from the commodore. The glasses of his lookouts had evidently made her out to be a submarine disguised by the bending of a sail on an elongated signalmast, a device becoming more and more frequent in these waters. But there was no excitement in the brief detour, for the *Venetia* boys had been deceived in a similar way several times before, and when she was found to be merely a small Spanish craft loaded with fish there was the usual criticism of the nervously inventive visions of the convoy commander's lookouts.

There were many letters from home waiting for expectant "Venetians" on arrival at Gibraltar, and no one applied for liberty, except a few of the shore incorrigibles, to whom "beating it for the beach" is a sort of automatically habitual movement, to be made each time the anchor is dropped, there being no existing reason to ask for it nor necessity to suggest it. Several of the letters received in this mail were from mothers, expressing sincere hopes that, in these distressing times when the to-day never foreshadowed the happenings of the morrow, their carefully trained boys had not altogether forgotten their duties to the Ruler of all things. In some cases the maternal injunctions had produced their intended effect, for, it being now a sunny Sabbath morning, a church party of more than usual size was organized, headed by Paymaster Schnetzler and Ensign Howard. During the service, the latter, after a long and apparently fruitless effort to render the mechanical drone of the young clergyman into some form of comprehensible language, turned to "Pay" and asked:

"What language is the parson preaching in?"

"That's just what I was going to ask you," was the whispered reply.

"Lay off whispering in church and maybe we'll be able to get him later on."

And when service was over and the two shipmates resumed their inquiry as to the mother tongue of the clergyman, "Pay" unhesitatingly declared that it was nothing more or less than pure English, whereupon Howard, who was still in doubt, replied:

"It did sound something like it, but if that's pure English I think I prefer the brand of American that we get at home."

The next day was the Fourth of July, and it broke in depressing silence as the eight bells of the mid-watch sounded and there were neither sirens, tin horns, nor firecrackers to arouse the slumbers of the patriotic. As the day dawned, those on deck and bridge at the time listened in surprise to the funereal stillness of an Ally town, whose streets were already filled with people. Then the advisability of organizing a large liberty party for the purpose of showing the people of Gibraltar what the Fourth of July really meant to Americans was seriously discussed, and volunteers were plentiful who were willing to be arrested for disorderly conduct or the discharging of firearms in the public streets.

But then came the voice of authority, followed by suggestions from the more tactful. Not only had orders come for the departure of a new Bizerta convoy at daylight, but, even if shore leave were possible, it would be neither good form nor sense to remind our present venerated allies of certain past performances of no little historical importance.

This convoy was one of nine ships, with the *Venetia*, U. S. S. *Wheeling*, and British and French trawlers as escort. Shortly after breakfast it was noticed that the *Venetia* was progressing through a cloud of black smoke

almost dense enough to conceal a small fleet. Captain Porterfield rushed to the telephone and rang up the engine-room with even more than his usual alacrity.

"Who gave any orders for a smoke-screen—what's the matter down there?"

"It's that new Gibraltar oil, sir!" replied the "Chief." "If it doesn't get better we shan't be able to make steam."

Then, when it was noticed that the galley funnel was emitting smaller but equally dense clouds of smoke, inquiry developed the fact that it was impossible even to start a fire that would cook anything, and all that day and night both wardroom and forecastle were compelled to subsist on uncooked "chow." The next morning the smoke was as dense as ever, and the Chief reported that he was unable longer to continue the specified speed. Then came a peremptory signal from Captain Osterhaus of the *Wheeling* to stop that smoke or the convoy would expose its position to any enemy that might be lying in wait for it. The skipper, ever ready with a caustic reply, signaled back to Osterhaus:

"We'll stop it when you can send us some good American oil in place of that Bolshevik stuff somebody palmed off on us at Gibraltar. We've already pumped nearly two thousand gallons overboard."

"All right; do the best you can," was the reply.

"As if we didn't always do that," thought the skipper. "No doubt he thinks we've gone into mourning for this dull Fourth of July."

Careful manipulation of burners supplied the ship with sufficient steam to make Bizerta, but it was some time before the wardroom teasers ceased twitting the Chief over his smoke-screen.

# CHAPTER XXVI

## AN AMUSING SIDE TRIP

WATCHERS FROM ALOFT—THE DIRIGIBLE VERSUS THE AIRPLANE—A COMPANIONABLE FRENCHMAN—THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTIC OF ARAB TOWNS.

AS Bizerta was approached, some of those keen watchers from aloft, in the shape of two airplanes and French dirigible A.T. 8, appeared from out of the mists in the direction of Sebra Bay. The dirigible assumed a position ahead of the convoy, preserving the same approximate speed, while the two planes made graceful circles above the convoy, at an altitude so low that the throbbing of their engines could be distinctly heard.

Too much cannot be said in respect to the value of these vastly varying pilots of the air in safeguarding a convoy from attack from afar, because of their widely spreading range of vision, which is much more than twice as far-reaching as any that is possible from the bridge or crow's-nest of a ship. Then too, except when at too great an altitude, it is often an easy matter to detect the outlines of a submerged U-boat far below the surface, something that is never possible from the deck of a vessel, where the vision is a glancing one that does not penetrate through a single ripple of the sea.

Again there arose an oft-repeated discussion among careful observers as to the relative merits of the two systems of aerial navigation, and each had its supporters. Some declared distinctly in favor of the airplane because of its superior speed; others held as closely to the dirigible because of its greater cruising radius, while the adherents to the rules of safety first preferred the lighter-than-air machine because a collapsing wing or a rebellious motor could not make a sudden plunge into the sea inevitable. Opinions seemed to be equally divided as to the relative efficiency of the two systems, so the verbal contest was eventually decided as are boxing bouts where a decision is difficult. A draw was declared: the dirigible was the safer guide for a convoy, while the airplane would prove infinitely more aggressive and far-reaching as a defender.

Sebra Bay was reached with an utter absence of interest, for it had gotten to be an old story, owing to the great number of Bizerta-Gibraltar convoys in which the *Venetia* had been a doughty policewoman, or, to more delicately express it, a protectress. On leaving Gibraltar, however, there had been rumors spread to the effect that a change of route for the future was entirely probable, and those of the ship's company who had decided to combine routine duties with side trips ashore began to discuss such possibilities as might be interesting in that direction.

Bizerta itself had been learned by heart from every viewpoint, and was now "stale, flat, and unprofitable." The cafés had lost whatever modicum of charm they once seemed to offer, because their habituées were on terms of at least nodding acquaintance with nearly everyone on board, and now seemed to regard with languorous indifference the cap-ribbons bearing the

name U. S. S. *Venetia*. The shopkeepers even, having learned by oft-repeated experiment whom they could "trim" the easier, were courteous only to those particular individuals and welcomed them with open arms, while they calmly smoked their pipes and cigarettes, regarding all others with utter disdain. The French and Arab maidens now lavished such of their smiles as were alluring upon newer comers, probably because they had learned to distinguish the difference between the amateur jacky who had left a family behind him and the professional one to whom family is merely a side issue not to be made a dampener of such association or pastime as might offer itself during shore liberty.

The environs of Bizerta, however, had not as yet been explored, and were said to offer many points of interest well worth a visit. Having been deceived before by the assurances of clever and altogether biased regional boomers, it was decided to await a report from a group of venturesome pioneers, then in process of organization. This was composed of Paymaster Schnetzler, Lieutenants Armstrong and De Camp, and Ensign Howard, self-appointed pathfinders to blaze a trail toward pastures new to be invaded during possible future visits to Bizerta; that bailiwick having been definitely set down as being a dead one in so far as local attractiveness was concerned.

There were openly expressed regrets on the part of most of the pathfinders as the intrepid group appeared at the railway station to board the 4:30 train for Tunis. The waiting-room was stuffy and dirty, the prospective passengers dirtier still, and the railway carriages ghastly ruins when placed in comparison with the most venerable rolling stock of the poorest equipped railway in the United States.

THE PARK, BIZERTA

MARKET-PLACE, BIZERTA

"If this bus is any reflection of the policies of government ownership," said one of them as the already disgusted group climbed into the poorly ventilated compartment, "I'm for handing the American railroads back to the companies right away."

The motion was carried without debate; and after a confusion of official voices on the platform, the slamming of the compartment door, the snorting of a long-unwashed little locomotive, and the shrill shriek of its piccolo whistle, the train pulled away and began to maintain a speed not appreciably greater than that of a loaded army truck.

The pathfinders were somewhat pleased to note that they were not alone in the compartment, for above the brass-besprinkled dress uniform of the French Navy there beamed the countenance of a dapper little officer—apparently of the rank of assistant surgeon—which had stamped upon it all of the marks of gentleness, which seems always to be the prevailing characteristic of such part of his race as knows how to be polite.

After the usually desultory conversation, touching upon scenery and the like, together with the obvious remarks regarding the indolence and evident squalor of the entire North African population, there came an interrupting query from the little Frenchman:

"*Pardon, messieurs. Y a-t-il quelqu'un ici qui parle français?*"

The fact that none of the Americans possessed more than a mere smattering of the Gallic tongue was duly communicated; but, not to be put aside through lack of any effort of his own, the stranger persisted in becoming acquainted by the more encouraging statement:

"Eh bien, but—eef you please—I can to spik Inglees."

This claim was far from correct, as the reader may already have divined to his own satisfaction. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the labored preciseness of his diction, together with its elaborateness of pantomime, made him quite intelligible and he was at once made thoroughly acquainted with the Americans, after a more or less intricate process of introduction.

With increasing volubility in the delivery of what he believed to be "Inglees," he confided to the now deeply amused "Venetians" that he was a doctor in the French Navy, on leave, and about to visit a relative in Tunis. He was deeply grateful to have been so soon placed on terms of intimacy with officers of the great navy that had crossed the seas to the succor of his bleeding country, and forthwith appointed himself as guide and courier, to conduct them personally through the highways and byways of Tunis, all of which he had traversed many times.

The acquaintance ripened into something like boon companionship during the three and a half hours consumed in the run to Tunis, and his earnest efforts to master the American songs "Uncle Sammy" and "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here" struck the American sense of the ridiculous as being side-splitting to a degree that shoved the proverbial box of monkeys far into the shade.

On arrival at Tunis, "Doc"—a sobriquet which offered him the most intense amusement—detected his relative anxiously waiting for him and at once confided what he had decided to do:

"Eef he shall not saw me he shall not know zat I veel come. I veel find heem to-morrow, but to-night I am for you. You veel find me on ze ozzaire side of la gare." And, turning the cold shoulder to his waiting relative, he managed to lose himself in the crowd and was soon

seen hurrying into concealment behind the railway station, to be soon joined by his new acquaintances, who were already deeply appreciative of his preference for their company.

The "Doc" soon established himself among the Americans as being not only an amusing companion but a tower of strength as a courier and purchasing commissioner. His extreme volubility of speech, tinctured with innumerable *faux pas* in the struggle with a language almost entirely foreign to him, made him a continuous performance in vaudeville, while his intimate knowledge of the city, its hotel, and its shopkeepers quickly unmasked the interesting places of the one and disarmed the cupidity of the others. He was extremely liberal too, a fact deeply appreciated by the Americans, for it should be known that the pay of officers in the French Navy is relatively a mere pittance in comparison with that of our own.

The sightseer at once clothes Tunis with the dignity of a real city, which is scarcely possible in defining the rank of Bizerta. It has many more and vastly better hotels than its smaller rival, and while its streets are no cleaner, or less malodorous, its examples of Moorish architecture are more numerous and its slums more intricate and noisome. This is scarcely complimentary to a city of minarets, domes, and gracefully waving palms which seems so poetically beautiful in photographs taken from distant points of vantage; but the truth may as well be told, for these cities are all alike when considered from a purely sanitary point of view.

The dinner at the hotel, with the "Doc" as caterer, was almost a revelation in gastronomy, and the adjournment to the open-air street café for coffee disclosed a strange pageant of motley humanity, a very small per-

centage of which seemed to have the slightest notion that a great war was in progress at so short a distance beyond the northern sky-line. In the evening several "shows" were visited, most of which seemed still to cling to the "hootchee-kootchee" dance for their principal attraction, and then came an exhaustive inspection of the sordid squalor of night life in the Tunisian slums, which was not terminated until 3 A.M.

At the hotel the "Doc" was most effusive in his regrets over the abrupt ending of an acquaintance which might easily have become a lasting friendship but for the exigencies of the war and the inevitable deterrent of distance. No doubt some knowledge that an expression of welcome or farewell by a kiss upon both cheeks is not a custom among American men prompted the little "Doc" to forego that form of salute. But, after effusively, and almost hysterically, grasping his grateful guests by the hand, he said:

"For all my—heart I weesh—I can to say au revoir, but I am moch to be—afraid it must to have been—adieu—adieu!"

It was confidently expected that the "Doc" would be at the 6:45 train in the morning. But when it drew out of the station with him nowhere in sight, it was generally believed that possibly he had been sorely chided by his relative for the neglect of the evening before, and was now doing penance for it by a somewhat similar slight to his newer and less-lasting friends.

BAB-BENAT GATE, TUNIS

BARRACKS AT TUNIS

# CHAPTER XXVII

## THRILLING DAYS AGAIN

UNEVENTFUL RETURN TO GIBRALTAR—THE "VENETIA" IS TRANSFERRED TO THE GENOA CONVOY ROUTE—TWO DAYS OF EXCITEMENT—A FUSILLADE OF DEPTH CHARGES—TWO FREIGHTERS TORPEDOED.

THE Tunisian pathfinders returned to the ship, after a hot and dusty ride through the early morning hours, to find that a convoy of seven ships, mostly loaded with vegetables, was waiting for escort to Gibraltar. They were closely questioned by their wardroom mates as to the advisability of making a liberty jaunt to Tunis in the event of a return to Bizerta. But while the report rendered by them was flattering in the extreme, a reading between its lines offered ample proof that any repetition of the outing would not justify the expense of it, in the absence of some person who would be competent to replace the "little French Doc."

The run of four and a half days to Gibraltar had in it no outboard incident to disturb its zigzaggy monotony, except on the second day out, when a signal from the flagship directed the *Venetia* to investigate a suspicious-looking object that had been sighted by one of the merchantmen and its location verified by a dirigible

that had come out of Algiers to act as the "watchful eye" of the convoy. In spite of the fact that the miserable quality of the oil, which was worse in Bizerta than that obtained in Gibraltar, rendered it impossible to retain any uniform pressure in the boilers, this belligerent detour was accepted without complaint, except from the chief engineer, whose objections, however pyrotechnically emphatic, were not conveyed to the captain.

This digression from the routine formation proved to be another of those precautionary wild-goose chases. Nothing was found in the direction indicated, and it was generally conceded that, if there had been an enemy submarine there, he was not of the kind to "stand out and fight in the open," so had discretely submerged.

All the way to Gibraltar the fuel oil gave constant trouble, and had it not been for the foresight that had installed a capacious "steamer" in the galley, all hands would have been compelled to subsist on cold "chow," for the range positively refused to burn. An officer who came on deck immediately after one of Chief Perry's splenetic criticisms of both French and English oil profiteering reported that had his last outburst been conveyed to the home governments there must have resulted either his "resignation for the good of the service" or a severance of friendly relations between those countries and the United States.

On arrival at the "Rock" it was learned that at last the *Venetia* was to be transferred to another convoy route, which was to be the vastly more interesting, and no doubt equally exciting, one to Genoa, Italy. To give added significance to this news rumors were heard to the effect that "The Painted Siren of Babylon" had become accredited with the enviable reputation of being

altogether the real fighting ship in any escort of which she had formed a part. Then too, the belief that the *Venetia* would soon be acclaimed as the true avenger of the *Lusitania*, in disabling the submarine U-39, was gradually gaining ground, and proofs of that glorious achievement must soon be forthcoming. These proofs, however, not having yet lifted the story out of the realm of common gossip, and since no second conference had been called to determine the truth or falsity of it, the *Venetia* took her place at the "fighting end" of the first Gibraltar-Genoa convoy, of twelve ships, with every man aboard of her, from captain to oilers, morally certain that these gratifying rumors were utterly undeniable.

There were now two passengers aboard, which fact again provided the wardroom with the ever-welcome appearance at the mess of new faces. These were Surgeons C. H. Weaver and G. S. Phillips, U. S. N., on leave and bound for Genoa, and it is no stricture upon the personal charm of comrades of long standing to confess that there is much relief in finding stranger smiles and newer voices to salute and return in the morning across the breakfast-table, in place of the usual perfunctory salutation, if indeed there be any at all.

It must be confessed that the morning meal is often begun and dispatched in grim silence, except when the commanding officer is in the mood for conversation or instruction, and as a rule the seeming impoliteness is, after all, excusable. The hours of sleep are brief enough at the best; but when one of these is broken by the unnecessary clatter of dishes, or chatter of garrulous shipmates in the adjoining cabin, some sort of a breakfast-table "grouch" becomes a certainty.

On the second day out a radio message was picked up

warning all guard-ships to be ready for immediate action, as two submarines had been sighted some miles ahead of the convoy. Any caution of this nature was scarcely necessary on board of the *Venetia*, for her skipper had already satisfied himself that all guns were loaded and "sure fire," likewise that the detonating pistols and launching gear of the depth charges would be ready when wanted. The submarines failed to approach within fighting distance during all of that night and the next day. But on the day following, shortly after sunset, that deadly muffled report and column of blackened spray alongside of the British S. S. *Messidor* conveyed the intelligence that she had been fatally struck, and then soon followed the fateful message to the effect that she was sinking and needed immediate assistance.

Lieutenant Mangan, who was on watch, sounded "general quarters" and signaled the engine-room for full speed ahead. The *Venetia* plunged into the gathering darkness with every man at his post and Gunner Jacobus at the launching gear of the depth charges awaiting the order to "launch away." This soon came, for the ship was now within the calculated area of the submarine's action, and the first charge exploded so close to the stern that everyone forward believed she had surely been torpedoed. But reassurance came with the launching of more charges so rapidly that, in considerably less than twenty minutes, twelve of them had churned the black waters into a mass of writhing foam.

Sharp eyes and keen visions peered long into the night for the signs of another enemy destroyed. But none appearing, attention was paid to the sinking *Messidor*, which suddenly dived out of sight at 10:40, and all but one of her crew of thirty-four were saved by the British trawler *Kadania*. It was learned that this single fatality

DESTRUCTION

EXPIATION

was a fireman, who must have been killed on the first impact of the torpedo, for his vessel was struck immediately under the boilers, and it was most fortunate that her entire engine-room force had not met a similar fate.

The *Venetia* was now many miles astern of her defensive position off the starboard quarter of the convoy—which of course was not anywhere in sight—and while in search of it an inspection was made of the stern to determine what damage, if any, had been caused by the close inboard explosions of her own depth charges. Fortunately, however, the damage to the hull was not serious enough to create any alarm; but the shock in itself was so severe as to crack mirrors and jar away the tiling in bathrooms and about the wardroom fireplace. The ship was now "secured from general quarters," and all on board, save only those in the routine watches, retired to dream of another possible destruction of an enemy submarine, and to record in their memories one more night battle bravely fought by their now more than ever beloved *Venetia.*

At daylight the next morning before the ship had overhauled the convoy, there were sounds of heavy cannonading ahead, which continued for many minutes, and there were many pangs of disappointment because another opportunity for added glory must have been missed. Just before the convoy was reached, the firing ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and when the *Venetia* had returned to her formation position, it was discovered that the supposed naval battle had been precipitated by a false alarm that had plunged every vessel of the convoy into a panicky cannonading.

The presence of one or more submarines was known, because during the night the S. S. *Rutlinglin* had been torpedoed and sank in twenty minutes.

At daylight one of the ships—naturally a merchantman—had signaled that a submarine had been sighted close by, and immediately began firing. Then followed perhaps a hundred shots or more, discharged at nothing but their wakes or innocent porpoises, a large school of which was passing at the time. This decidedly sham battle caused considerable amusement in the convoy when the several accounts were radioed about from ship to ship, and one account was to the effect that the *Wenonah* had fired several shots into her own wake. This latter story may be with safety set down as being altogether authentic, since it was duly recorded in the official deck log of the *Venetia* and commented upon at length in the diaries of two of the officers.

Early in the forenoon of the next day two French trawlers hove in sight at such a rate of speed for vessels of that class and build that for a time they were mistaken for enemy gunboats. But when their signals were made out and the reason for their hasty approach duly wigwagged, it developed that they had been sent to escort two of the merchantmen into Marseilles. The detaching of the two vessels was effected without any further ceremony than their turning out of formation and proceeding to the north without even displaying a good-bye pennant.

The interest attendant upon this purely perfunctory ceremony was now diverted toward two destroyers approaching the convoy from the direction of the Italian coast. They proved to be under the flag of our Roman allies, and since the convoy had already, in the opinion of those most concerned, been provided with adequate protection, the new arrivals were regarded as having been politely dispatched by the Italian authorities to escort the *Venetia* and her less important assistants to

the enviably historic port of Genoa for the first time.

There was a real thrill of excitement again that afternoon when, during luncheon, "general quarters" was sounded and gastronomic activities were suspended for those of promised warfare. Three merchantmen were signaling the presence of a close-by submarine, and Captain Porterfield mechanically lifted his binoculars to make out the usual signal, "Venetia will proceed to investigate ahead," or, to employ the vernacular of the forecastle, "Get busy and bag that sub."

The expected signal was already floating from the halliards of the flagship, and the *Venetia* appeared jauntier than ever in her response as she proceeded in the direction signaled, to find that she had again been dispatched to establish that some characteristically hysterical merchantman had perpetrated another false alarm.

# CHAPTER XXVIII

## GENOA TO GIBRALTAR

"DOING" THE BIRTHPLACE OF COLUMBUS—VARIED IMPRESSIONS—A GALE IN THE GULF OF LYONS—CHANGE OF COMMANDERS.

SHORTLY after sunrise on July 26, the justly famed and truly beautiful harbor of Genoa was entered with the convoy in a long, single-line formation, many miles in length owing to the narrowness of the entrance channel and the congested condition of the mooring places, for there are no anchorages where a vessel may "drop her hook" and swing to and fro with the tide. It was so crowded with all types of marine craft, lying close together, that one of the men, who hailed from Alameda, compared it with the lying-in basin of Oakland Creek, during the idle months, when all the Alaska salmon fleet, sealing and whaling vessels are in winter quarters there. More than two hours were consumed in stretching cables from bow and stern to the bow or stern of the nearest vessel, and even then the mooring was not free, for the U. S. S. *Wenonah* was secured alongside of the *Venetia*.

While this was not comfortable, or quite safe in the estimations of those who had previously supposed that free and unrestricted anchorage was necessary to berthing comfort, it provided a close neighbor for the

GENOA

Venetian humorists. These bantering souls neglected no opportunity to crack jokes over the sudden attack of hysteria that fell upon the *Wenonah* on the morning of the 24th, when she mistook her own wake for that of an enemy submarine and venomously discharged into it many precious projectiles from her three-inch guns. It was noted that the replies to these sallies were neither courteous nor polite, indicating a strangely unreceptive sense of humor on the part of the *Wenonah's* crew. Therefore, during the rest of the twenty-four-hour stay in Genoa, communication between the two vessels was confined to mere nodded salutations or desultory conversation on subjects not so provocative of ridicule.

The knowledge that the stay in Genoa must be very brief, lasting only until the following morning, made applications for shore liberty very numerous. The streets of the home town of Columbus were soon filled with sightseeing officers and sailors in the American uniform, bent variously upon a change of food in its many excellent cafés, visits to its numerous points of interest, or mental relaxation in its theatres and moving-picture houses. The magnificent Columbus monument was visited first in most instances, perhaps out of respect for the prevailing Italian notion that but for Italy and her adventurous son America would up to this very day be peopled by her aboriginal races. If at that moment the men from the *Venetia* had been on a sightseeing jaunt in Florence, however, true Florentine eloquence would no doubt have so assailed their sentimental beliefs that, after being shown the alleged former residence of one Amerigo Vespucci, they must willy-nilly give credence to the claim that to Florence, and not Genoa, must be accorded the glory of having through a favored son won the distinction of being alone respon-

sible for having placed the Western Hemisphere on the map of the world. Such is fame, and so are the confusing differences of opinion in the writing of medieval history!

The point of interest which attracted the most attention, and which is the one almost invariably first visited by the sojourner in Genoa, was of course that singular admixture of art and artifice known as the Public Cemetery. Here, above the graves of venerated dead, have been erected some of the best examples of modern sculpture, to be almost submerged in the mass of conglomerate crudity which mechanically betrays, according to the tastes or beliefs of the builders, the different stages of gloom and adulation.

This was, naturally enough, the principal topic of discussion on the deck of the *Venetia* that night before "Taps," and while the criticisms were numerous and strangely varied, the prevailing impression seemed to be to the effect that the Genoese graveyard is the most surprising art exhibition in all the world, which it certainly is. There were other criticisms, too, and few of them altogether complimentary to the much-vaunted fame of the city where Columbus was probably born, but which utterly withheld its admiration until he had done something worth while under the more speculative standard of Ferdinand and Isabella.

One enthusiastic exponent of the virtues of spaghetti as a nutritious article of diet complained that in several places he had inquired for his favorite food in vain. He had gone ashore full of a long-unfulfilled ambition to feast upon the "Wop's indispensable dish in the Wop's own land." But nobody seemed to know what spaghetti meant, and he was compelled to satisfy his appetite with some other form of *pasta*, prepared after a fashion not to be at all placed in favorable comparison with the old-

familiar spaghetti to be had at all times in restaurants at the foot of Telegraph Hill in San Francisco for the small sum of twenty-five cents.

There were emphatic complaints, too, from those who had gone ashore determined to disagree with Secretary Daniels in his ideas as to what forms of beverages should be used in the navy. Sweet vermouth and sour wine seemed to be the only drinks to be had for a price commensurate with the pay of a sailor, while the *vini spumenti*, as Italian champagnes are called, were too expensive, and the brandies so full of "kick" as to render the "call to the mast" almost inevitable on the following morning.

For reasons best known to themselves, the reported impressions of the officers following their first visit to Genoa were almost unanimously flattering, and most of them felt tinges of regret in contemplation of their return to Gibraltar on the following morning, with a possibility of Bizerta revisited in prospect. In explanation of this favorable impression of Genoa, however, it should be said that such of the officers as made the tour of the city were, as a rule, guided about and financially managed by Lieutenant Krump, of the Red Cross, who had all the sights worth seeing at his finger-tips, could speak Italian fluently, and disarmed the gouging proclivities of the café proprietors by making preliminary dickers for supplies that in most cases gave the purchaser decidedly the best of it.

These "shore feeds" were almost invariably managed on the "Dutch treat" principle, share and share alike for everything consumed. This system had already gained many converts away from the hospitable but often burdensome American habit of indiscriminate treating, which permits the remittance man to flaunt his

wealth ostentatiously, while it keeps the depender upon pay always in debt or in danger of being included on the list of the penurious.

At 9:30 on the following morning Genoa was cleared with a convoy of twenty ships bound for Gibraltar, and the *Venetia* in the scouting and fighting position astern. The night passed without incident, but the next day was marked by a more than ordinarily stiff gale in crossing the Gulf of Lyons, which soon placed the hitherto regularly formed convoy in such hopeless confusion that its lost members were not found and guided back into their stations for twenty-four hours. The safety-rail of the maintop crow's-nest was carried away during the night, so the service of a lookout in that station was necessarily dispensed with until it could be repaired when daylight should serve.

The only other damage sustained during this stormy passage of the Gulf of Lyons—which many mariners have termed "Biscay the Second"—was reported the next day when the flagship signaled the *Venetia* to stand by her, as she had broken down. The convoy proceeded on its way half protected until hasty repairs could be made to the flagship's engines, when it was soon overtaken, and Gibraltar reached on the following morning without further mishap of any kind and no ceremony except the usual setting of the ship's clocks an hour ahead.

Greenwich mean time (G. M. T.) is always used at sea, while the clocks are changed to shore time on entering a port. To illustrate this almost daily changing of time on some runs, be it said that in both Genoa and Bizerta the shore time is two hours ahead of G. M. T. during the summer, and an hour ahead in the winter, as at these ports they use Central Europe time.

THE TRANSFER OF COMMANDERS

On the day after arrival in Gibraltar (August 2) much surprise was created by the announcement that Captain Porterfield, who had so ably commanded the *Venetia* during the most exacting incidents of her career, was to be detached to command the U. S. S. *Wheeling*, being replaced by Captain Charles F. Howell, who had gained an enviable reputation through many years of service in the U. S. Coast Guard. Whether the change was made "for the good of the service" or effected through personal request was not known, and what was said with reference to it was merely conjecture and the unsatisfactory speculations of rumor. It was no one's business anyway except his own, and it may be said without fear of contradiction that there were few aboard among officers or crew who were not sorry to see him one of the two main figures in the ceremonies of the transfer.

These were simple, with an atmosphere of the serious about them, giving them an official solemnity that was most attractive to the uninitiated.

Officers and crew, arrayed in clean white uniforms, dressed for inspection on the boat deck in two columns. After the usual routine inspection, Captain Porterfield read his orders from the Navy Department transferring him to the *Wheeling*, and Captain Howell read his assigning him to the command of the *Venetia*. Then, after a thorough inspection of the ship by the two officers, followed by general drills, Captain Porterfield waved good-bye to all, quietly descended the gangway to a waiting launch amid the cheers of the assembled crew, and the *Venetia* was now commanded by a new captain, who had good-fellowship mingled with determined authority stamped on every feature of his pleasant face.

# CHAPTER XXIX

## UNDER A NEW COMMANDER

CAPTAIN HOWELL INTRODUCES HIMSELF—BRIEF SKETCH OF HIS CAREER—COURTEOUSLY BUSINESSLIKE—AND THEN BIZERTA AGAIN!

CAPTAIN HOWELL lost no time in placing himself in close touch with his roster of officers and outlining to them his intentions and policies. Immediately following the cermonies of assuming command, he assembled all commissioned officers in the wardroom, acquainted himself with the name of each of them, and then addressed them in a pleasant, chatty way, carrying with it a certain sort of manly authority that was most attractive to his hearers. He said that he had no friends aboard, and would endeavor to make none, since it was always his custom to avoid the playing of favorites. All he required was constant service and strict attention, and so long as he knew that everyone was performing his duty to the best of his ability, there would be no complaints from him, and he hoped that no one would annoy him with petty complaints concerning small matters. The meeting adjourned with everyone convinced that the change of commanders had not been for the worse in an executive way, and he withdrew with a pleasant smile that

gave promise of much cordiality during the off-watch hours, when the junior officer places a high estimate upon an exchange of pleasantries or a brief conversation with the skipper.

Charles Frederick Howell was born in Bordentown, N. J., March 19, 1881, and educated himself with a view of entering permanently into the stirring and ever-shifting business of the sea. At the age of eighteen he entered the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service (now known as the Coast Guard), and received his commission two years later. He has made many cruises in Atlantic, Pacific, and Alaskan waters, and is well known in San Francisco, where he has made many friends both in and out of the service. On the outbreak of hostilities with Germany, he was entrusted with the duty of locating radio and submarine bases in the Caribbean Sea. Subsequently he was sent overseas and commanded an escort for convoys from Gibraltar to England, Wales, and Portugal, until his assignment to the *Venetia*.

It had taken both officers and crew some little time to accustom themselves to the stern, authoritative bearing of Captain Porterfield, trained into him during his four years' course at the Naval Academy, where the curriculum with respect to discipline may be said to be more or less undemocratic. But after a few months the snappy emphasis of his commands and the earnest but aggressive method of describing anything he wanted done were accepted as a matter of course, coming as they did from a Government-made naval officer.

With Captain Howell, however, it was not difficult to make a mental photograph of his nature and character almost with the rapidity of a snap-shot. Having worked his way in his chosen service from its rudimentary stages to the dignity of a commission, his official bearing at

once gave the impression that he was a man who would be the captain of his own craft in its strictest sense. This, too, with an utter absence of anything approaching "side"; and that impression became strengthened with each of his official acts until the *Venetia* finally went out of commission.

His first concern after the meeting in the wardroom was to become thoroughly familiar with his ship, and the *Venetia* was carefully inspected, with the assistance of the mechanical force, from stem to stern and from conning-tower to keelson. This inspection revealed the necessity of an early going into dry dock for repairs, cleaning, and overhauling, which must be attended to as soon as his request for them could be officially approved. This would probably be done immediately after the already organized convoy had been escorted to its destination and another one brought back to Gibraltar.

The announcement that the *Venetia* was to be restored to the Bizerta run, at least temporarily, was not received with the least sign of pleasure by anyone aboard. Strange to relate, the numerous swimming parties that went ashore seemed to betray the existence of a general impression that thorough cleanliness was a glaring essential for a comfortable return to the more or less unwholesome purlieus of Northern Africa.

Chief Perry, having learned that oil of good quality was to be had at the supply station, ordered 40,000 gallons of it, sufficient for a cruising radius of 3500 miles, and the water-tanks were filled with an excellent quality of that indispensable liquid from the great storing reservoirs high up on the precipitous sides of the "Big Rock." The Chief was asked why it was that crude petroleum was sold by the gallon and pure water by the ton; but he offered no explanation, and a somewhat

CAPTAIN CHARLES F. HOWELL

scathing reference to "Foolish Question 1323" was overheard as he disappeared down the hatchway to the torrid lairs of his "Black Gang."

The first departure under a new commander was made four days after his coming abroad, or, to be more precise, on the 6th of August. The *Venetia* moved to her old station on the port quarter of the convoy of nine ships, and the run to Bizerta was effected with monotonous regularity, never having been once interrupted even by the almost inevitable signal to zigzag somewhere out of formation and investigate a "suspicious object."

Smaller interest than ever was expressed for unfragrant Bizerta, and scarcely anyone applied for liberty, except the old "mossbacks," to whom the privilege has become an incurable habit and is demanded immediately on entering a port, whether they really want it or not.

Remembering the interesting experiences of the run over to Tunis on the last Bizerta visit, another similar jaunt was organized by "Pay," Howard, Armstrong, and De Camp, with a further purpose of visiting ancient Carthage as a new side trip out of Bizerta. It seemed to this adventurous quartette a most promising omen that in the railway compartment with them there was another French naval surgeon, who was at once made guide and purchasing commissioner, vice the "little Doc," lost, strayed, stolen, or passed into oblivion.

He proved an excellent substitute in the more material duties of his temporary office, for he was truly a master of the gentle art of preventing extortion, and always cheerfully produced his one-fifth of all expenditures relating to appetites affecting either liquid or solid substances. But he lacked the humor, celerity, and exactness of "Doc," and after enfolding a panorama of

Tunis by gaslight which did not improve on second acquaintance, he finally succeeded in removing whatever good impressions had been formed of him by hurrying his charges to a train. This arrived at Bizerta too late in the morning to make the Carthage visit possible, and the return convoy was scheduled to steam away at noon.

The weather was balmy but distressingly hot, and the progress of the convoy of twelve ships at a speed of seven knots was altogether too slow to create one of those cooling breezes that invariably accompany speed on land or sea. Worst of all, if any air whatever was stirring it came from astern, rendering automatic ventilation impossible. Fortunately, however, our old friend Suspicious Object was signaled from the flagship, and the *Venetia*, speeding up, zigzagged herself into a delicious breeze, which burned away as she returned to the convoy after investigating an innocent nun-buoy, no doubt wrenched loose by the sea from some close-by harbor.

The same kind of relief came on the following day—probably the hottest Sunday in the memory of anyone aboard—when the "suspicious object" demanding official investigation under full speed proved to be a life-raft, "unpeopled and alone, on the glassy swells of a breezeless sea."

Wash day dawned with splashing ripples playing about the cutwater and along the sides, while nature's own blessed ventilation was present in the form of a spanking breeze dead ahead. Then came radio messages, both from headquarters ashore and a far-distant dirigible, warning the convoy of the presence in the neighborhood of several submarines, and directing that it proceed in single-line formation into the forbidden

neutral waters along the Spanish coast. "Happily, the *Venetia's* allotted division was composed of speedy vessels, so Captain Howell telegraphed the Chief to "hit 'er up," and the division arrived at Gibraltar on Wednesday, many hours in advance of the remainder of the convoy.

Immediately on arrival at the "Rock," Captain Howell buckled on his sword and donned all of the regalia permitted by the brass-detesting Secretary of the Navy to attend the ceremonies consequent upon the assuming of command at the Gibraltar base by Sir Herbert Guthrie-Smith, in place of Sir Rupert Miles, transferred. The elaborateness of this affair gave it an atmosphere of true monarchial pomp when placed in comparison with the perfunctory simplicity of the exchange of commanders on board of the *Venetia* only a few days before. There was a reviewing-stand, approached by a carpeted path, and decorated with much British bunting together with a display of the colors of the Allied nations, in which the Stars and Stripes were not altogether inconspicuous.

Apparently the entire population of Gibraltar was assembled on the parade-ground, and the army barracks and naval craft in the harbor had been denuded of soldiers, sailors, and marines, who passed in review to the music of a melodious aggregation of brass bands. Speeches were made which were altogether inaudible to the assembled multitude; the orders of the incoming and outgoing governors-general were read by their secretaries; Sir Rupert shook hands with Sir Herbert with stolid dignity; the crowd cheered as the military stood at "present arms"; and, then, while the pageant was melting away, the two dignitaries were either commiserated or congratulated by the assembled officers,

with all of the brilliant ceremonial of a presentation at Court.

When Captain Howell returned aboard he announced that the *Venetia* would within a day or two go into dry dock, perhaps for a period of thirty days. Not that there were any "outward and visible signs" of defects that could impair her efficiency in any way; but she had now been in the service for considerably more than a year, subjected to the most strenuous activities ever yet exacted of a vessel of her type, and the new skipper very considerately thought that a thorough "tuning and resting up" was long overdue.

# CHAPTER XXX

## DRY-DOCK DAYS

OFF ON LEAVE—REVIVAL OF THE BELIEF THAT THE "VENETIA" AVENGED THE "LUSITANIA"—A COLLISION NECESSITATES REPAIRS—IN THE HALLS OF THE ALHAMBRA—READY FOR SERVICE.

THE knowledge that the protracted period of activity attendant upon overhauling would require greatly restricted duties from both officers and crew brought the first visions for extended liberty that had come since leaving the home port. The opportunity was grasped with avidity at once. In this regard Captain Howell was most liberal, for he believed that men can become rusty from too much exposure as can steel plates and machinery.

His keen perception had told him that there were several cases of fag and nervousness among the officers, while the morning police court ceremonies "at the mast" were becoming more and more frequent. He knew that change of scene and as unrestricted liberty as could reasonably be expected would restore the morale of his personnel to its original excellent standard, and so encouraged jaunts to points of historical interest by those who could afford it, while liberty on the Gibraltar "Beach" was made general, albeit with an increased shore patrol.

Naval shore patrol is necessary owing to the fact that the naval force in a port is made responsible for the behavior of the personnel of its several ships, and a commissioned officer is detailed to act as an extemporized captain of police, while a certain number of enlisted men are detailed to make arrests for any infractions of local laws or navy regulations. The offenders are taken to their own ships for judgment and punishment, instead of being tried and imprisoned by the local authorities, and this custom is general in all countries. No one who does not select that very essential kind of duty as a livelihood likes to be made a police officer, so the detail as officer of patrol is generally regarded as being the most ungrateful duty of naval routine. But nearly everyone above the grade of enlisted man is likely to be assigned to it, and generally takes his medicine without complaint, for he knows that it would profit him nothing if he made one.

The first to "shove off" on ten days' leave were "Doc" Drake and young De Camp, who apparently had not yet surfeited themselves with the allurements of North Africa, and so hurried aboard of an eastbound convoy for Oran and Algiers. The other officers began to discuss pairing off for similar jaunts in the near future, conferences as to routes and the probable cost being first an unavoidable feature.

Admiral Niblack came aboard, inspected the ship with great care, and unhesitatingly pronounced her to be without the slightest doubt the stanchest and most efficient converted yacht that had yet come under his observation. He furthermore sent thrills of patriotic pride into the souls of officers and jackies by the reiteration of his firm belief that the *Venetia* had by her own depth charges made herself the true avenger of the

*Lusitania*, such assistance as was claimed by other vessels being largely negative. There seemed now to be but little doubt that the German submarine U-39—the officially accredited destroyer of the *Lusitania*—now hopelessly disabled and interned in the Spanish port of Cartagena, had been placed *hors de combat* by the *Venetia*, and within a short space of time that fact would be duly recognized by both the British and United States governments. The main points of evidence he was not yet at liberty to divulge, but all known details had been forwarded to Admiral Sims, who had in turn forwarded them to the British Admiralty, and a full report would be soon rendered.

This truly exhilarating fund of information was of course impossible of concealment in the breasts of the wardroom officers, for among naval volunteers and reserves there is much more cordiality than could possibly exist in the regular navy, and it spread about the ship with the celerity and conviction of news from a village gossip at a church sewing circle. Small wonder then that the shore patrol was busier than usual that night, that commissioned officers themselves did not altogether escape its vigilance, and that the punishments "at the mast" the next morning were meted out with the usual preponderance of dignity, but accompanied by a singular moiety of severity.

There now occurred an accident which placed the *Venetia* in a condition requiring not only refitting and cleaning but absolute repairs of a more or less elaborate kind. The basin inside the mole in which the ship was moored was considerably congested, and H. M. S. *Jeannette II* was moored alongside. Then, under tow, U. S. S. *Seneca*, in attempting to moor in her place as she was towed away, lost steering way, and her stern

struck the *Venetia* a heavy blow well forward, breaking the telescope from Number 3 gun, tearing away part of the rail, dislodging the foretopmast, bringing it hurtling down upon her own deck, and so damaging the *Venetia's* foremast itself that a new one was made necessary.

The decks now swarmed with the only kind of dockyard workmen possible in those days when the good men were either at the front or enlisted aboard of the ships, so the Spanish neutrals known as "spiggs" were employed. These were slow, surly, dirty, and venial, and as the lily farmer contemplated the first shift of them that shuffled aboard, he laughed sneeringly and said:

"Why, one of those Yaqui peons down in Mexico is sure a speed-king alongside one o' these ducks."

On the 26th of August, the *Venetia*, "slightly disfigured but still in the ring," entered Dry Dock No. 1, followed by U. S. S. *Seneca*, whose uncontrollable stern had wrought the damage. There was deep satisfaction in the breast of everyone aboard that the wound enforcing this temporary idleness had not been inflicted by a Hun projectile, and there was an added compensation in the reflection that the *Seneca* herself was a companion cripple in the dry dock.

Prior to entering the dock all ammunition had been removed from the magazines, and these, as well as state- and store-rooms were thoroughly cleaned and painted where necessary, and rust in every part of the ship "chipped away" and similarly covered. While all of this work was progressing it was decided that the *Venetia's* personnel should shine in social as well as athletic functions, and after a game of baseball with a team from the *Seneca* and *Castine* and won by the latter there occurred the long-to-be-remembered Venetia Dance which was given in the "Assembly."

JAUNTING IN SPAIN

GENERAL VIEW OF THE ALHAMBRA

In addition to officers and enlisted men, not absent on leave, invitations had been issued to all Gibraltar officials whose names were obtainable, and when in the "wee sma' hours" the bugle called "all ceremonies off," it was unanimously pronounced altogether the most enjoyable social function given at Gibraltar since the beginning of the war, because it was given after the true American democratic way, with an entire absence of stiffness and more or less of a disregard of conventions.

There being now no need of more than one or two officers aboard the laid-up *Venetia*, the prearranged extended leaves began to depart, commencing with Schnetzler and Howard, who took the evening boat for Algeciras, bound for Granada and the wondrous Alhambra, to be soon followed by Bussell and Mangan. There were misunderstandings with reference to the arrival and departure of trains by both couples, and the four officers came suddenly together at Bobadilla and boarded the train for Granada. The first tour out of a distressingly indifferent hotel, whose genuine Spanish provender was unanimously pronounced to be vastly inferior to the cheapest Mexican table d'hôte in Los Angeles, was sadly unpropitious owing to the inefficiency of a surly Castilian who surely must have been the worst guide in all Spain.

After numerous disputes he was detached and paid off; another one secured, who was a grade or two better; and after tickets were bought entitling the party to admission to all buildings and palaces of interest, the tour of one of the most beautiful historical cities in all the world was begun. This continued through two beautiful days full of fascination over the wonderfully preserved specimens of Moorish architecture, and gardens almost as full of gorgeous bloom as suburban California.

It is not in the province of this volume to descend to the advertising propensities of the guide-book author, since its mission is to record the incidents in a war-vessel's exciting career. But a few of these side trips are touched upon for the purpose of showing that war is not all horror, and that its searchers after martial glory may find relief from its sickening vicissitudes amid the odors of flowers, and where the battered citadel can be replaced by wondrous vistas of palaces whose wars are now ghostly memories among the pictures of, let us hope, eternal peace.

Four days in all were spent by the four *Venetia* boys in, about, and around the glorious mysteries of Granada's Alhambra, and that they might supply their shipmates with adequate descriptions of its many beauties some of them studied "The Conquest of Granada" most assiduously on the return train. But, after standing once more on the deck of their home craft, still swarming with loitering workmen and uncomely in the smoky environment of the dry dock, the obvious retort of the officer first addressed as to how he enjoyed the trip was the handing over of the book, with the words:

"You fellows can read all about it in 'The Conquest of Granada,' and to prove that we were there here's a photograph of the four of us taken on the spot. But if you expect any of us to give a wardroom lecture about it that would be any good—why—it can't be done."

It was the 14th of September before the repairs were finally made and the regenerated *Venetia* moved saucily to a harbor mooring to be assigned to her station in the convoy ready to start for Genoa.

She now no longer wore the gaudy camouflage habiliments designed for her by the imaginative Mr. Fisher

MASQUERADING AT THE ALHAMBRA

SCHNETZLER, MANGAN, BUSSELL, AND HOWARD

and worn by her on many courses, calm and turbulent, peaceful and warlike. Her singular but confusing garb of many colors—and to confuse is the purpose of camouflage—had made her so conspicuous as to cause her to be mentioned in German dispatches captured from prisoners, and as a consequence orders were issued that she be painted in the familiar ante-wartime battleship gray. It was also said that Captain Howell did not see as much humor in her several notorious nicknames as Captain Porterfield had, and so had himself asked permission to make the change. At all events the change was made and she looked all the better for it. Her former colors had been false as sirens are false; she was now no longer pointed at as the "Painted Jezebel" or "Vampire of Babylon," but was a modestly attired, inconspicuous converted yacht, done over for renewed activities.

As the *Venetia* moved out into the stream one of the swarthy and diminutive mess attendants was made out gesticulating madly from the dock and in his polyglot dialect begging to be taken aboard. He hailed from those beautiful island possessions in the Far East which enjoy the distinction of being the only country in all history that was occupied by right of conquest and then paid for by an indemnity of $20,000,000, as though the conquerors were the real malefactors who had brought about the war and the consequent victory of Dewey at Manila Bay. Moved by the mañana instincts of his race, he had either forgotten that his vessel was scheduled to sail that morning or had become imbued with those ideals of personal independence which have been encouraged into his race by a super-altruistic administration and supposed that, of course, he could take his own time in getting aboard. A few days later the *Venetia* had responded to an order from the commodore of the

convoy to investigate a "suspicious object" with the usual fruitless results. The object proved to be a water-logged ship's-boat, and after the return to station in the formation the lily farmer was heard to remark:

"I sure am disappointed. I'd have bet even money it was going to be that Filipino risking starvation in an open boat rather than neglect his duty."

The *Venetia's* duty in this convoy of eleven ships was to zigzag astern of it with an incessant frequency that kept the watch officer's nerves continually on edge. For the first time since she had been actively engaged in convoying there was a foreign commodore, and, being Italian, he must have been imbued with all of the explosive excitability of his race, for he was continually wigwagging or wirelessing instructions, and insisted upon these interminable and wearing changes of direction in all sorts of weather and under all conditions of light or darkness.

This insistence on zigzagging at night by the guard-vessels—no matter what their station in the convoy—almost resulted in dire calamity on the night before reaching Genoa. The *Venetia* was "wobbling" along, feeling her way through the impenetrable black of night, when suddenly one of the merchantmen, the *War Drake*, loomed up directly across her bows, almost close enough to have heaved a biscuit on her deck. Lieutenant Bussell, who had the watch at the time, telegraphed "full speed astern," put the helm hard over to the right, and almost grazed the port quarter of the *War Drake* before he passed astern of her.

Had the merchantman been sunk Bussell would have been subjected to the record-clouding humiliation of a general court martial, with the probable resultant reduction of several numbers in rank, and through no

fault of his own. But Captain Howell had already ventilated his indignant amazement over this system of night zigzagging, congratulated Bussell for his quickness of thought and action, and expressed his keen satisfaction when, a few days later in Gibraltar, Bussell received his commission as a "bull" lieutenant.[1]

This run to Genoa was accomplished within five days, when the news came aboard that a convoy was waiting and would move to the westward on the following morning. As a consequence, nothing was reported in the way of adventure or sightseeing, barring a few indulgences in "beach chow"[2] and one or two drives along the interesting cliff drive east to Genoa. This convoy formed and was gotten under way at 8:30 and Gibraltar was reached without interruption or incident of any kind, through balmy weather, a smooth sea, and a close adherence to the Italian system of continuous zigzagging.

[1]A slang phrase almost invariably used in the navy for the rank of a full lieutenant.

[2]Meals ashore.

# CHAPTER XXXI

## TEMPEST AND SUNSHINE

DULL DAYS AT "GIB"—ANOTHER GALE IN THE GULF OF LYONS—A HIDE-AND-SEEK CONVOY—HOMESICK NURSES ENLIVENED.

GIBRALTAR was becoming more and more trite and uninteresting every day. All places and side trips of interest had been done over and over again; bull-fights had long since been tabooed as being altogether out of harmony with the American notions of fair play; English cricket did not appeal, and but for an occasional boxing-match and game of baseball there would have been no attractive outdoor amusement; there had been no recent encounters with submarines to brag about; and there seemed to exist in all quarters that attitude of indifference that seems irremovable from the demeanor of stranger folk with whom one comes into contact nearly every day.

In this connection, too, it may be stated, with no fear of successful contradiction, that cases of close intimacy between Americans and the service personnels of other nations must be regarded as being glaring exceptions to what is almost undeniably a general rule. There is no cohesion of tastes, habits, or sense of humor, nor any accord whatever in the appreciation of things material or the viewpoint from which a subject is discussed.

When the American forces first came overseas to strengthen the shattered battlefronts and render invincible the insufficient Allied navies, they were received with the enthusiasm and acclaim of veritable redeemers from certain disaster. But constant association of differing natures and temperaments; the sallies of the American joker, always considered as impertinent by those who have never learned how to take a joke, soon engendered a resentment that grew into dislike, and then came what is much worse to the American nature—absolute indifference and patronizing disdain. So, long before the signing of the armistice, it became all too apparent, the other Allied forces not being as good "mixers" or humorists as the Americans, that the English, French, and Italians did not like the Americans; while the Americans entertained similar sentiments toward the English, French, and Italians. There was at least a temperamental impediment to the personal realization of the altruistic ideal evolved by President Wilson; namely, the arming of over three million men to secure a democratic brotherhood for all the world. In this connection it is related that as the next convoy moved toward Genoa our friend the lily farmer closed a conversation to the above purport with the characteristic aphorism:

"Oh, well, history repeats itself. Wasn't it Julius Caesar who once said there were no good sports but Romans? That goes double with me to-day with reference to the Americans." And then there ensued that smiling silence that always signifies approval.

For the first three or four days out of Gibraltar the convoy of eighteen ships progressed smoothly, with the *Venetia* zigzagging patiently on its port flank. Then, like a hawk above a flock of hens, the appearance ahead of a

dirigible balloon suddenly plunged the merchantmen into so hopeless a tangle of formation that it was not megaphoned or wigwagged into alignment for twenty-four hours. "Submarines ahead" had been radioed from the dirigible, and as most of the convoy was composed of Italian vessels, with an Italian commodore in command of it, this nervous hysteria of caution was quite unavoidable.

On the fifth day the falling barometers indicated approaching bad weather, and it came in the shape of a veritable gale immediately upon entering the frequently turbulent Gulf of Lyons, rendering zigzagging impossible, and even straightaway navigation difficult. Long before midnight the velocity of the wind increased to sixty miles an hour, accompanied by such thick weather that not one of the ships of the convoy was visible from the deck of any other. In the morning the *Venetia* found herself alone in the midst of the angry waters, and it at once devolved upon her to assist in the retrieving of the scattered flock of derelict argosies. Finally six of the ships were made out "hove to" many miles astern, and, while the term is in no sense nautical, it must be said that the *Venetia* speeded astern of them and fairly "shooed" them under way in the teeth of the now slackening gale. Smoke ahead indicated the presence of the remainder of the convoy beyond the horizon, and before nightfall it was overhauled, standing still, as though awaiting developments of the nature of which the commodore seemed to be in serious doubt.

Now, however, his dismembered command being again in at least approximate formation, he signaled it to proceed, for the gale had almost entirely abated, and the Italian liking for short zigzagging was again manifested to its utmost. But the lights of Genoa soon hove

in sight, so the ships and their escorts were directed to kill time with independent maneuvers until the following morning. Then the more-than-ever-congested harbor was entered in single file, and the *Venetia*, after much backing, filling, and warping, accompanied by the hysterical yelling of the Genoese harbor pilots, was finally comfortably moored by the stern to the municipal dock, which proved to be a marked improvement over any of her former berths.

There now seemed to exist an impression in the minds of the more convivially inclined among the wardroom officers that after the tempestuous experiences afloat of two days before some of the sunshine of adventure ashore would be not only quite excusable but hygienically desirable. Accordingly, four of the more venturesome of the officers "shoved off" for the "Beach," there separated into ones and twos, and began individual tours of inspection, having for their purpose a general meeting for conference later in the afternoon. Then it was intended that a plan of action for the single night in Genoa would be duly set forth and perfected from such suggestions as the several conspirators might have to make.

The selected base from which all necessary supplies and information could be secured was the Red Cross Headquarters, where a former acquaintance with Major Crump could be renewed and the project for the evening's entertainment submitted to him for advice and possible active enlistment in it. The major not only had several attractive suggestions to make, but insisted upon commanding or directing such plan of operations as might be adopted.

The first move was the commandeering of a Red Cross ambulance—a greatly glorified example of the

Ford "Fliver"—and a drive to the American Convalescent Hospital. Here, it was believed, the only members of the gentler sex speaking in a familiar tongue might possibly be induced to consent to an evening's furlough from their none too cheerful duties. This hospital, donated by an Italian duke and placed under the supervision of the American Red Cross, was a gorgeous villa in the center of a luxurious estate and fitted by American skill and efficiency for the care of the sick and wounded of any of the Allies. Three of the officers and the major made a tour of the villa and its gardens, but the "Kid"—so called because he was much the youngest of all the wardroom officers—became separated in some way, and no doubt was making a tour of inspection on his own account. The others had decided to look him up in order that a conference might be held, when suddenly he burst upon them with his face wreathed in smiles, and conveyed the information that he had not been idle.

"It's all fixed," said the "Kid." "I've found three delightful little nurses who are quite as ill from homesickness as any of their patients are with wounds or fevers, and they's for having a party."

A hasty conference was at once held, two more homesick heroines of the Red Cross enlisted, leave of absence until midnight was granted to them, and the glorified Ford was soon under way bearing a jolly group of Americans bent upon whatever form of clean adventure might suggest itself.

The evening began with a jolly dinner at the Olympia Restaurant, the party by this time having been increased by the enlistment of Captain Williams of the Red Cross and Lieutenant McClay of U. S. S. *Castine*. This finished, a dancing soirée was suggested to take place at

the duke's villa, but the major regretted that the place contained no instrument fitted for the playing of dance music. McClay solved the problem by hurrying to the quay, calling a boat, rowing out to the *Castine*, and returning with the ship's phonograph. This and all hands were crowded into the ambulance, a return was made to the villa, and dancing carried on until the stroke of midnight, when the Red Cross Cinderellas hurried to their stations and the five Princes Charming to their somber quarters.

This was pronounced to have been altogether the most enjoyable relaxation from routine that had been suggested since the *Venetia* had been in the service. The memory of it was all the more grateful for the reason that so favorable an opportunity had presented itself to provide these five brave little servitors of stricken heroes with an evening of pleasure and to replace the gloom of the hospital ward with the chatter of admiring countrymen and the merry strains of good old American "jazz."

There was not one of those boys but went to sleep that night full of keen satisfaction that in his search for an adventure he had fallen upon one so fruitful in performing a gracious service for those self-sacrificing, overworked, unpaid, and heroic little homesick nurses of the American Red Cross.

The next morning a start was made for the return trip to Gibraltar, with a convoy of twelve ships and the *Venetia* zigzagging on the starboard flank. Slow progress was made that night owing to its inky blackness, and another day dawned with the Gulf of Lyons gale that had been passed through on the eastward trip still raging with renewed fierceness. The *Venetia* shipped several heavy seas, one of them tearing away the star-

board gangway, which for a time beat against the sides with such force as to threaten to make a breach through the bulkhead of the wardroom. Soon, however, the gangway floated clear, and with this assurance of safety came the knowledge that the convoy had again been scattered by the storm; and it was not restored to formation until the following morning, when the mischievous and turbulent Gulf of Lyons had been passed and there was a smooth and speed-inspiring sea.

Now radio messages were received giving warning of the presence of two submarines to the southward, and directing the convoy to seek safety in the neutral waters of the Spanish coast. Accordingly, the ships turned sharply to the north, in single-line formation, and, after two balmy days very close to the shore, Gibraltar was reached without further incident.

Much sympathy spread about the *Venetia* when, on opening his mail, Captain Howell received a cablegram announcing the death of his wife, and when he went below to mourn his irreparable loss alone, the colors were lowered to half-staff on the stern of the *Venetia* for the first time.

# CHAPTER XXXII

## THE APPROACH OF VICTORY

APPEARANCE OF INFLUENZA—GLORIOUS NEWS FROM THE FRONT—SINGULAR DISPOSITION TO MINIMIZE AMERICA'S SHARE—TO MADEIRA AND THE AZORES—RUMORS OF AN ARMISTICE—THE "FLU" INTERFERES WITH PARTICIPATION IN THE GLORIFICATION.

IMMEDIATELY following the arrival at Gibraltar, Doctor Drake reported Lieutenant Mangan down with influenza and one or two mild cases among the crew. The manner of its appearance and development was not made manifest by any process of scientific deduction as to whether the germs had been carried from Genoa or smuggled aboard by the first liberty party returning from "Gib." But it was held to be of small consequence how and whence it came, so long as it was prevalent, and a discreet silence with reference to its presence was advised lest publicity might lead to official interference from panicky departments of health, there being many cases in the port.

This visitation, however, was soon forgotten in the excitement that followed accounts of the continued destruction of German submarines, and the glad tidings of victories following in rapid succession along the French fronts. St.-Mihiel, Château-Thierry, the Ar-

gonne, and a threatened Metz were on the tongues of everyone afloat or ashore; and, while the new German front said to have replaced the now utterly effaced Hindenburg Line might remain impregnable for months, there were hundreds who were so optimistic as to believe that sweeping victory was quite possible before the beginning of another year.

It is to be sorely regretted that record must here be made of an apparently studied disposition to minimize the importance of the share of the United States in this complete reversal of war hopes and conditions in France. Naturally enough, the Americans, basing their opinions on the published reports, grew to believe—and very justly too—that but for the fierce onslaughts of the American legions the Hindenburg Line would still be intact and unbreakable, and that they, and they alone, were almost entirely responsible for these glorious revivals of the Allied hopes.

Strange to say, however, none of the other Allied forces in and about Gibraltar seemed in the least inclined to indorse the American view of the situation, and, as a matter of fact, British cocksureness remained as stolidly immovable as the mighty "Rock" itself. Loud and angry disputes became notoriously prevalent on the docks, in the streets and cafés, and some of these resulted in personal clashes that demanded the interference of the patrol.

It must be confessed, too, that these acrimonious belittlements of Uncle Sam's victories at the front were by no means confined to representatives from the forecastle and the barrack-room, for British officers themselves were equally culpable in their ridicule of the, at least to them, utterly fantastic claim that America was winning the war. One evening at a club an American

officer, who was a guest, commented proudly upon the strong American predominance in the latest news from France, whereupon an English major made the sneering rejoinder:

"Hysteria, my dear fellow, hysteria. You Americans have taken one or two villages and are jollying yourselves into the notion that all the rest of us are standing still." Whereupon another unconvincible Briton remarked:

"It's all very nice for you Yankees to step in and claim all the glory after we've got 'em licked, isn't it now?"

The American officer found himself incapable of framing an adequate reply to the exhibitions of palpable jealousy, so turned on his heel and walked away with the only obvious reply, "Oh, what's the use?"

These incidents are here recorded to substantiate the oft-repeated claim that such resentment of American military supremacy existed long before the end came; increased in intensity after the signing of the armistice; and if any such claims of this supremacy be made in future history, they will be regarded as monumental jokes among such of our allies over the sea as have no knowledge of what has been written into Government records and distort their individual beliefs into recorded facts.

The war records of both France and the United States will show that the mission of General Joffre to this country was for the sole purpose of demonstrating that only a declaration of war by the United States and the sending of vast armies to France could avert so awful a calamity as the domination of the whole of Europe by Germany; the records of both our Department of the Navy and the British Admiralty and War Offices will

show that similar pathetic pleas were made by the representatives of the British government sent for that purpose to Washington. In his vigorous and undeniably truthful autobiography, Admiral Sims declares that when he was sent on a secret mission to England he was assured by the Admiralty ministers that unless the United States should interfere the Allies could not possibly hold out for thirty days longer; and this startling confession was afterwards affirmed in an audience with King George V, who added his plea to those of his ministers. Small wonder, then, that American soldiers and sailors abroad resented with voice and brawn the sneering personal taunts of French and English soldiers and sailors to the effect that they were merely eleventh-hour heroes who claimed a share of the victory already won.

To return to the *Venetia*. Within a day or two after the last arrival from Genoa, orders came from the naval base to the effect that she was to be sent to Madeira and the Azores with mails and supplies, and possibly a passenger or two. This news was received with much satisfaction, that the beloved little craft was, to all intents and purposes, to return to the pleasurable activities of yachting, for convoying had for some time ceased to furnish any of the excitements of naval combat.

The warnings of late with reference to the presence of submarines had been regarded as being the result of nervous suspicion, and there had not been a sinking in the Mediterranean for many weeks. It had come to be generally believed that now both German and Austrian U-boats were effectually bottled up in the Adriatic, and a mighty barrage of trawlers and gunboats now seemed to render impossible the passage of any submerged or floating enemy through the straits.

So the coming yachting cruise was welcomed with keen delight, for there is no more charming yacht haven along the entire European or African coasts than that offered by the port of Funchal; and what made the voyage all the more like a pleasure junket was the fact that there was no slower vessel to convoy or tow. Once more, too, "a new face across the table" occasioned the usual grateful smiles of hospitality, in the person of Lieutenant Bouillot of the French Navy, whom the *Venetia* was to "passenger" to his latest assignment at Madeira.

It must be said, however, that the extreme reticence of this new table companion was a matter of much disappointment, both to the bantering humorists and those who sought such information or gossip as might be secured from an officer in another service. In point of fact, the extent of his knowledge of English was never definitely established. His attempts in that language were confined almost exclusively to monosyllabic directions to the mess attendants with reference to his menu selections, while conversations in his own tongue with those Americans who flattered themselves that they had been educated in it afforded considerable amusement to those who doubted it.

This delightful run under full speed, unhampered by tow-line or convoy, had all of the exhilaration and rest-inspiring features of a veritable yachting cruise. There were the usual precautions of darkened ship at night, carefully manned lookouts, and the armament always ready for instant action; but both officers and crew went about their duties with the same precision and sense of security that characterize intensive drilling in times of peace.

The three days' run to Madeira was marked by no incident of note save a brisk little gale which came one

day to relieve the pleasant monotony of balminess and sunshine. On the early morning of the third day Funchal hove in sight, with, above it, the tiny mountain ranges covered with verdure, which precipitated among officers and crew a series of projected jaunts, and possible feasts enlivened by introductions to the wines of Madeira in their native habitat.

To the deep regret of everyone concerned, however, these were not to be, for, immediately on letting go the anchor, the quarantine officer came alongside and declared that no one must land from the *Venetia*, since it was known that there was "Flu" in Gibraltar, and it was not proposed that the scourge should be imported into Funchal or any other part of the islands.

Captain Howell protested vehemently, declaring that, "Flu" or no "Flu," he must land. He had confidential mail and dispatches to deliver; he deemed it best that these should be delivered in person; and, despite the warnings of the quarantine official, ordered his boat alongside and shoved off. This, however, was met by further official interference, backed apparently by more determined authority, and the captain was forced to return to the ship, where he radioed to Gibraltar for definite instructions as to how to proceed. Both the American and British consuls came out for their confidential mail, amid inspiring roars of celebration from the shore, which bore all of the earmarks of a properly conducted noisy Fourth of July in the United States.

There were bonfires, firecracker and other gunpowder explosions, followed by discharges of musketry and small cannon; and as if the glorious news had been flashed into the soul of everyone aboard, each voice cried out, "Germany has quit!" The two consuls, however, who were not allowed to come aboard, shouted

from the safe distance decided upon by the harbor officials, that there had that morning come an unverified message to the effect that an armistice had been signed, which had plunged the entire population into a wild fever of celebration. The news had been contradicted almost as soon as received, but glorious rumor was preferred to cold fact and the celebrations continued throughout the day.

If the *Venetia* had been suddenly transformed into a detention hospital for the isolation of a hundred violent cases of influenza, instead of the two very mild cases aboard, she could not have become so enveloped in the atmosphere of disappointment and depression that prevailed everywhere. Not only had her personnel for a second time been thwarted in a desire to "do" the beautiful island of Madeira, for which so much had been promised, but here was a celebration going on ashore in which the American soul, born with a love of celebrant noises, might not participate. This state of depression was plunged into one of abject despair when through the mists of the next evening from the northeast there was flashed a message to the effect that at two o'clock on the morning of that never-to-be-forgotten 11th of November, 1918, the armistice had actually been signed and the war was over, with the glorious light of victory glinting the banners of the Allied conquerors.

There was, happily enough, a single ray of relief to the silence of depression, in the hysterical protests of Lieutenant Bouillot. These appealed very strongly indeed to the American sense of humor, always ready to secure a laugh from the discomfiture of someone else. It mattered not to him that the entire personnel of the *Venetia* had been forbidden to go ashore; his mission was of paramount importance and to detain him was a national

outrage, which, in due time, France would most adequately avenge. At all events, this was the generally accepted translation of his mad flights of indignation, with an employment of English words in the approximate ratio of one to ten.

These protests were renewed with an increased volume of Gallic expletive and spleen when Captain Howell announced that, since no instructions or orders had come from Gibraltar, he had decided to wait no longer, but would steam for the Azores at once. This intelligence, being duly conveyed to the lieutenant, he hurried to the captain trembling with the fiery wrath of a commanding admiral whose orders had been disobeyed.

"*C'est impossible!*" he shrieked. "*Je suis un officier diplomatique de la France. C'est nécessaire que je départ à Funchal!*"

"Je nong tong pas," was all the French that Captain Howell could command offhand at that particular moment, engrossed as he was with the more important matter of getting under way. But the lieutenant understood him and made a truly painful effort at framing a reply in English:

"I forbid! You shall not go to ze Azore! I make spik for France!" Thereupon the captain smiled.

"Sorry, sir," he said. "I'm speaking for the United States and I've just given orders to get under way."

At that very moment the engines began to throb and the *Venetia* moved with rapidly increasing speed toward the open sea. The irate lieutenant tried to protest again, but his hysterical rage choked him and he strode fore and aft along the gun-deck, apparently threatening the most condign punishment for the entire United States Navy by outraged and insulted France. Two hours later he stood, with his face resting between his hands and

looking toward the fading land, the picture of woe and desolation.

Then there came a radio message from the authorities at Madeira to the effect that arrangements had been made for the landing of Lieutenant Bouillot, so no alternative was left for Captain Howell but to return at once. As the harbor was again approached, a Portuguese patrol-boat relieved the *Venetia* of her unwilling guest, and he "shoved off" silently, without even a single gesture of farewell—save a very perfunctory salute to Captain Howell—and he paid no attention whatever to those of the jocularly inclined junior officers.

Some weeks later it was learned through correspondence that the Madeira authorities, having received highly exaggerated reports of the influenza contagion on the *Venetia*, confined the lieutenant for three whole days in a fumigating room before he was finally released.

"I wonder what they did with that bunch of 'spinach,'" mused one of the younger officers in the wardroom that night, inelegantly referring to the magnificent and prodigious beard worn by the French officer.

"Why, fumigated it, of course," was the reply. "It would have been a crime to reap away a luxurious crop of silken whisker that has been nursed and fertilized ever since he refused his first shave."

It was also learned from several of the kodak fiends aboard that many attempts to snap-shot this magnificently bearded little Frenchman had met with unvarying failure, evidently because of the lack of seriousness on the part of the photographers. One of them told that he had once been almost on the point of pressing the button in bright sunshine, when the subject detected a knot of the sailors laughing at him and indignantly covered his face with his cap and hurried out of focus.

On the way to Ponta Delgada, and while every soul on board of the *Venetia* was still bemoaning the denial of a share in the great victory celebration at Funchal, a radio message was picked up announcing the destruction by a torpedo of the British battleship *Britannia*, with an appalling loss of life, on the day after the signing of the armistice. This was taken by all to have been an act of malignant revenge on the part of some submarine commander, and, while it was no doubt unauthorized, it served its purpose in again reflecting the spiteful sentiment of a relentless and uncompromising foe.

SINKING OF H. M. S. "BRITANNIA"

# CHAPTER XXXIII

## DAYS OF REJOICING

FROM THE AZORES TO GIBRALTAR—CONTINUED ALLIED JEALOUSY—A PLEASURE TRIP TO LISBON—PORTUGUESE HOSPITALITY—A FOODLESS BANQUET—A REGRETFUL FAREWELL.

THE distress at having been denied the privilege of adequately celebrating in a friendly island city the sweeping victory that had come to the Allied arms began gradually to wear away, but, two days later, when Ponta Delgada was reached blazing with excitement, it was soon replaced by real exhilaration. It is told that, just before leaving Funchal, one of the officers, under stress of disgust at being quarantined, emphasized it by shaving off his mustache, which had been grown and fostered with such care and attention that it was one of the jokes of the wardroom. But such satisfaction as might have attached to this wanton destruction of a precious facial adornment was at once removed by the assurance of his brothers of the mess that the operation had vastly improved his personal appearance, and so the joke was altogether at his expense.

The day and a half at Ponta Delgada was not placed under the usual rigid rules by overcautious officials, so almost the entire ship's company hurried ashore to

celebrate. One of the officers has said that it was more or less of a "delayed action" celebration, since its fervor was somewhat relaxed after three days of continuous glorification, but much of it was still going on, and the appearance of several scores of happy mariners bent upon excitement or trouble soon fanned what dying embers there were into the leaping flames of friendly jollification.

It is not the purpose of this chronicler to record the exact extent of this glorification or the manner of manifesting it. Suffice it to say that there is no entry in the deck log of the *Venetia* touching upon any untoward official action "at the mast" on the following morning. Further than this, it was admitted once in conversation that a certain officer of the deck, who was on watch as the liberty stragglers crept up the gangway after hours, found something of greater interest beyond the opposite side of the ship, and such mild offenders as there happened to be passed quietly down to their quarters undetected. In point of fact there seemed to be a general conviction in the minds of those in the different grades of authority that everyone who had been concerned in an achievement for which the world had been waiting for more than four horrifying years should be permitted to celebrate it in his own blessed way.

To the infinite credit of the Portuguese people of Ponta Delgada, it must be said that they were vastly more cordial to the men of the *Venetia* than they had ever been before. These humble representatives of the smallest of the Allied nations manifested a disposition to magnify rather than to minimize the burdens borne by the United States in the winning of the war, which, unhappily for their sense of gratitude, cannot truthfully be said of any of the more important ones. This con-

gratulatory attitude was noticed everywhere during the two days' stay in this usually sleepy little port, and it was several times declared that if ever the *Venetia* should happen to visit Lisbon, there would never enter into the soul of any of her company an atom of doubt as to Portugal's impressions concerning what the United States had done in the titanic effort to secure democracy for a dissatisfied and disrupted world.

The reverse of this sentiment was again made all too apparent when, after a quick run of three days to the eastward, Gibraltar was reached again and the liberty parties hurried ashore. The first blaze of excitement immediately following the armistice had died away to some extent, but everywhere there could be noticed a spirit of egotistic elation, which no one seemed inclined to share with anyone else.

In all quarters there existed the undeniable proofs that a great victory had been won, and gigantic preparations were under way already for the disintegration of the land and sea forces and as immediate a departure under the homeward-bound pennants as the congested state of transportation would permit. But with the farewells for all time almost on the lips of those brave souls of three Allied nations who had been fighting shoulder to shoulder and starboard side to port, all fired with the same laudable determination to crush an over-ambitious and greedy foe, there seemed a selfish reluctance among the men of one nation to yield to those of any other more than the merest modicum of glory.

The Englishmen believed that they had flown to the succor of France and saved her from utter annihilation; the Frenchmen were more or less grateful for England's aid, but seemed to feel that in time they might have worked out their own salvation; the Americans very

justly felt certain that, until the time when the United States thrust her reckless soldiers through the hitherto impregnable German lines and made the German blockade in the North Sea a substantial reality, there was no victory anywhere in sight for the Allied hosts. It is true that the Frenchmen were less antagonistic toward the American claims than were the Englishmen, and they seemed disposed to accord them some share of memory's loot of glory. But the latter were inflexibly determined not only to appropriate to themselves the lion's share of that, but to deny that the Americans were entitled to any greater share than might attach to an eleventh-hour interference after Germany had already been crushed.

The conditions found this time in Gibraltar were the same as existed before the armistice—plus more jealousy—and while, happily, personal encounters were infrequent because of the vigilance of the shore patrol, the verbal disputes were many indeed. The bad feeling already engendered was gradually increasing in intensity, and there was no little surprise, and much satisfaction, on board of the *Venetia* when it was announced that since the ship would not be ordered home for some days, it had been decided to pay a visit to Portugal for purposes of sightseeing and no doubt attendant celebrations of the signing of the armistice.

It was of course not definitely stated officially that this distinctly pleasure trip was for the purpose of searching warmth to replace the coldness of Gibraltar. But there certainly existed a general feeling aboard of the *Venetia* that no other condition or consideration could have inspired it, and there was a corresponding hearty approval of the order which seemed to render it more strongly advisable. This feeling continued during

all of the daylight hours of the twenty-six consumed in the run to the mouth of the Tagus River, which possesses the not unjust distinction, in the minds of those who have traversed its picturesque and ever-changing courses, of being perhaps the most beautiful, in a pictorial sense, of all the rivers of the world.

When the river-pilot came aboard and the ship's prow was pointed toward a rugged reach between villa-dotted hills, a Portuguese transport entered the river bearing what was believed to be almost if not altogether the entire army of Portugal, returning from France. Not much of a contingent, it is true, when compared with the massive forces of other lands, but it represented what was perhaps all the fighting power that a struggling republic could afford to send away, and that republic was among the first, if not altogether the first, of the smaller nations to contribute her mite in support of the Allies. Cheers were exchanged again and again, which continued until the *Venetia* lost herself in the distance, and everyone aboard of her regarded the welcome from that returning transport of soldiers who knew not for what they had fought, as a good omen indicative of a heartier welcome when the capital of Portugal should heave in sight.

This omen was fulfilled to the utmost limit, for had the men of the *Venetia* been the sole conquerors of the Hun they could not have been more cordially welcomed or more lavishly entertained. It was a "wide-open" town opened wider for the especial benefit apparently of a receptive company of gallant American tars who were only too willing to pass through the "open door" of hospitality. The splendid clubs were opened to the officers; the most magnificent cafés yet visited by any of the crew were declared to be theirs during the entire

stay of their ship at Lisbon; and there was everywhere nothing but good feeling and a continuous riot of genuine conviviality. Naturally enough, those to whom the encouragement of unbridled revel is a trade lost no effort in getting next to the pay-rolls of the visitors and absorbing as much of them as was easily detachable. At the same time, the cupidity was not so blatantly "raw" as had been noticed among the races of Moorish or Arabian extraction, and in these day of mutual congratulation nobody minded much, anyway.

In Lisbon, too, those of the *Venetia's* youngsters who fancied an occasional wooing of the goddess of chance had their first opportunities for proving how unsafe an investment the roulette wheel is, amid the princely surroundings of the Palace Club and an equally splendid establishment know as Maxime's, in place of the smoky sordidness of the gambling dens of Bizerta and Tunis. Unlike the better known and more elaborate Casino at Monte Carlo, however, there was no limit placed upon time, and, instead of closing at eleven o'clock, everything remained in full blast until four in the morning. There were, of course, the usual stories told of how close someone had come to breaking the bank but had failed by making some false play, and no one who had wooed the fickle goddess had other than losses to report.

For the first time since the *Venetia* had been in the service there were no restrictions placed upon social entertainment, and visitors of both sexes came aboard for tea and to listen to the narratives of actual experiences in encounters with submarines. It was pleasant to learn from several of these visitors that the *Venetia* was generally considered to have been the avenger of the *Lusitania*; and since the proofs seemed to be almost beyond contradiction, much surprise was expressed

THE QUAY AT LISBON

IN THE PALACE

when they were informed that as yet there had come no official announcement to substantiate the claim. These assurances, however, created the conviction in the minds of all the ship's company that on the return to Gibraltar the official notification must come that would accord the right for the placing of a golden star upon the funnel in proof of her glorious achievement.

Thanksgiving Day was celebrated after the traditional American fashion by an elaborate luncheon in the wardroom in the late afternoon, at which there were several guests, and, once again, the cabins of the *Venetia* resounded with the almost forgotten music of woman's delight-inspiring voice. This was scarcely ended when Captain Howell came aboard and announced that the entire roster of officers had been invited for the evening to a splendid banquet and ball to be given by the Portuguese government in honor of the victory of the Allies, and that all must wear swords and as complete full uniform as was permitted by war regulations.

There were many who had deferred the eating of their Thanksgiving dinner until that much-to-be-desired feast could be dispatched in the company of the President of Portugal, and all proceeded to the great auditorium at the palace with appetites well whetted for the luscious menu to be laid before them by the democratic ruler of the Portuguese. To their dismay, however, instead of being seated at festive tables groaning under the weight of gastronomic luxuries, they were ushered into boxes of state, and looked on while hundreds of wounded soldiers, evidently ill at ease at having been placed on exhibition before the assembled élite of Lisbon, ate their meal in modest silence and looked as though they would have had a vastly better time alone at the barrack mess.

The President arrived, and everyone in the great audience stood at salute, the now appallingly hungry officers from the *Venetia* feeling certain that now they must surely be escorted to the banquet tables. Instead of this, however, the President made a distressingly long speech (in Portuguese, of course), announced another speaker (also Portuguese), and the audience stood at salute again. Another speech, in this unknown tongue, longer than the President's, was cheered to the echo by those who understood it, and the rising, sitting, orating, and cheering continued for hours. Finally at 11:30, the President announced that the function was over and left the auditorium followed by the entire assemblage and amid the strains of the Portuguese national anthem, with the now almost famished Americans still unfed. Happily, however, there were taxicabs in plenty; several of them were at once commandeered, and a top-speed run made to Maxime's, where there were no considerations of governmental precedence nor any summary dismissal of guests until daybreak; shortly after which *Venetia's* wardroom contingent strolled aboard, thoroughly fed, completely entertained, and well rouletted.

At 11:30 the pilot came abroad and the *Venetia* proceeded down the beautiful Tagus, with every heart among her company full of gratitude for the cordiality of those five merry days in hospitable Lisbon. It has been told many times that their memories will ever hold those days as having been the jolliest in their war experience, and all the more grateful because they were utterly unexpected.

Before leaving the Tagus a message was brought from the radio-room announcing the burning at her docks of the splendid steamship *Ophir*, once operated under the flag of the Spreckels Companies. This message was sent

THE BURNING OF S. S. "OPHIR"

to the *Venetia*, not only because of the one-time same ownership, but to announce the tragic death of an Oakland boy who in the attempt to escape through a deadlight opening was caught as if in a vise and slowly burned to death.

The photograph of the incident was given to the paymaster on the return to Gibraltar, and an eyewitness gave a stirring account of the gruesome tragedy and the almost superhuman efforts to avoid it. But the heat was so great and the hapless little victim so tightly wedged in the narrow diameter of the deadlight that the would-be rescuers could not remain long enough to widen the opening, nor could the victim extricate himself so that he might one day tell the friends at home of one of the narrowest escapes of the war.

# CHAPTER XXXIV

## QUEST OF THE GOLD STAR

ANXIOUS DAYS AT GIBRALTAR—NO NEWS FROM ADMIRAL SIMS—PERSISTENCE OF AN ADVERSE CLAIMANT—HOMEWARD-BOUND ORDERS DELAYED—AUTHORITY FOR THE GOLD STAR ON THE FUNNEL ARRIVES—WHO AVENGED THE "LUSITANIA"?

AS the port of Gibraltar was entered on the return from Lisbon the U. S. cruiser *Wheeling* passed out flying the homeward pennant. Every heart aboard the *Venetia* throbbed with the sweet certainty that she must soon follow, parting the waves on the vast stretch of leagues between a stranger land and home. Sundered hearts were to be reunited, severed ties made whole again, mourning firesides rekindled into happiness; and welcome cheers of friendship were to awaken the silence which had come at parting.

The ship moved slowly to the assigned berth alongside the long mole, Captain Howell hurried ashore for consultation with the American admiral, and all hands waited patiently for the good news that it seemed certain he must bring back with him. Their first thoughts naturally were of home, and then came another of paramount importance, not only to them, but to the service in which they had risked their lives: Was the

*Venetia* to be officially accredited as the true and only avenger of the *Lusitania?* The anxious hours of this waiting was relieved by the arrival of the mail, and the fortunate recipients of letters sought the solitude of quiet corners to read them. The armistice had not yet been declared when they were written, and nearly all of them expressed in tender words the pains of separation, soon to be dispelled by the tidings that they must end before the joyful replies could be dispatched.

Captain Howell seemed more than usually thoughtful when he returned. The almost ever-present smile was not present, and those who tried to read his thoughts through his eyes imagined that behind them there was either unrelieved anxiety or keen disappointment. But that the tidings he bore were not secret ones became known when the officer of communications learned of them and they were spread about the ship. The date for departure had not yet been set, and Admiral Niblack had not received from Admiral Sims at London any news with reference to the just claims of the *Venetia* for one or more gold stars. All that was definitely known was that on some date, as yet undecided, the *Venetia* and *Hannibal* were to escort a fleet of American submarine chasers across the ocean. Soon these began to arrive, singly and in groups, from their base at the island of Corfu, until there were a score or more of them moored alongside the mole.

It were idle to attempt to conceal the fact that the uncertainty of this information was disappointing to the men of the *Venetia*, but they had long since discovered that service in the navy is a waiting game, and had learned how not to yield to the ill-temper that comes of overstrained anxiety. In place of this, all those whose official rating gave them the right to make in-

quiries exercised that right on their own account. The *Surveyor* was in port, and as the only rival to the *Venetia* in the claim of being the avenger of the *Lusitania*, her officers were sought out and questioned whenever the opportunities offered themselves. Captain Pope, her commander, would have been quite satisfied with a share of the glory, but her executive officer refused to concede any moiety of it to the *Venetia* or any other vessel, that refusal being based upon no uncontested facts but merely his own obstinate personal conviction. Some of the officers supported him in this strangely selfish belief, while there were one or two who distinctly opposed him and declared that if in all fairness they were called upon to decide between the two vessels, their decision must be against their own. This dispute, it was now evident, must continue, gradually increasing in bitterness, until news should arrive from Admiral Sims; and all concerned now preferred to await that news rather than to depart for home.

In the days that followed, nothing but dullness reigned aboard the *Venetia*, and there was no change of any kind except that a new and very welcome watch officer was added to the wardroom. This was Ensign C. H. Benham, who, on the outbreak of hostilities, resigned a business position, entered the Naval Academy, and so applied himself to study that he earned a commission in four months. He at once became a favorite among officers and crew, and his own impressions with reference to his brief service on the *Venetia* are best described in his own words:

"I was indeed glad to be ordered to the *Venetia*, for truly she is a wonder. I hugely enjoyed every moment of the five months I was aboard of her, for in every way she was a completely 'happy ship,' or, as the sailors

ENSIGN C. H. BENHAM

would say, she is a home, and that is always the limit of the 'gob's' admiration."[1]

The dull days continued, and war-vessels under different flags moved past the mole where the little gray lady from California lay, and passed Europa Point Light on their way homeward. The U. S. ships *Wenonah*, *Arcturus*, and *Druid* stood out with flags flying, bidden Godspeed by the cheers of the friendly; and there were wondering queries all about as to why it was that no definite orders of any kind had come for the *Venetia*. Someone ventured the opinion that perhaps Captain Howell, under instructions from Admiral Niblack, was awaiting a message from Admiral Sims at London, and then patience came again to the anxious ones who were chafing under the apparent neglect that was depriving them of their just share of glory. Closely following the other ships, the *Surveyor*—now a bitter rival—circled around the end of the mole and stood out to sea. There was a sigh or two of relief that whatever claims the *Venetia* might make in the future would not be disputed by any possible contestant, when there came a shout of joy from the lily farmer:

"I win! I made a bet with a *Surveyor* quartermaster that she wouldn't have a gold star on her stack before she sailed away, and it ain't there!"

When he was reminded that there might be some difficulty in collecting his money, he replied:

"Oh, I'll get it all right. I'll follow his trail, and if he happens to be in jail when I find him I'll be sent in after him, if I have to get arrested for stealing pennies from an organ monkey's pocket."

It now became known that the ship's departure for home would not be delayed beyond a very few days,

[1]Ensign Benham is still in the service in command of submarine chaser 307.

which was information encouraging and reassuring, for the *Wadena*, *Sacramento*, *Paducah*, and *Manning* had just passed with colors fluttering elation, bound for New York, followed by many jealous eyes from the deck of the *Venetia*. Immediately plans were laid for the approaching farewell to Gibraltar, and the manner of it called forth both kindly consideration and bellicose threats. Those evincing the former believed that the Allied governments had been in no way responsible for the taunts of their land and sea forces voiced by inferiors and were in every way friendly to the United States. Others, however, believed that there should be another scrimmage or two to emphasize the Yankee contempt for their menial critics; but the wiser counsels prevailed and it was decided that while the final goodbye would be physically peaceful, it might be mentally surcharged with any amount of scorn and dislike, barring, of course, any too violent expression thereof.

It became known that at last the homeward-bound voyage was about to begin and that the date had been definitely set for December 21st. There were several hurried rounds of shopping for the purpose of providing belated Christmas souvenirs for the home folk, in which it was discovered that the ending of the war had not in the slightest degree lessened the gouging propensities of the various tradesmen and hucksters of Gibraltar. The good buyers reported several instances of bargaining ruinous to the sellers, while the poorer business men complained that they had been robbed more unblushingly than ever.

The anxiety aboard with reference to the granting of the gold star had not been dispelled by any news from London, and yet the busy ones who had been investigating the identity of the three submarines interned at

Cartagena were more completely convinced than ever that the *Venetia* had certainly earned one star and should be granted two. The U-57 had limped into Cartagena following the attack of May 11th when the *Susette Fraissinet* was torpedoed, and it was on this occasion that the *Venetia* had dropped seven depth charges almost directly into the wake of a submarine, evidently the one that had discharged the destroying torpedo. On the morning following the attack of May 17th, in which the *Whatley Hall*, *Sculptor*, and *Messidor* were the victims, the U-39—conceded to have been the destroyer of the *Lusitania*—made her way into Cartagena in a sinking condition, and reported that she had passed through a very volcano of depth charges dropped from a *brilliantly camouflaged yacht*.[1] The *Messidor* was torpedoed on July 23rd, and on that date the *Venetia* circled about the obvious position of the submarine that had done the mischief and dropped fourteen charges, with the result that on the following evening U-boat 59 struggled into Cartagena hopelessly disabled.

It was now learned that before the departure of the *Surveyor* for home some of her officers asserted that their claim was not based upon the dual attack on the night of May 17th in which she and the *Venetia* were concerned, but upon an individual attack of her own made later in the night and on the other quarter of the convoy. There was no one on board of the intrepid little Californian who was prepared to make the extravagant claim that this vessel was alone responsible for the disabling of all three of the interned U-boats; but there will never be the slightest doubt in the mind of anyone

[1]It should be remembered that on the night referred to the *Venetia* dropped twelve charges before the arrival of the *Surveyor* on the scene.

aboard but that to her depth charges must be ascribed the honor of having put at least two of them out of business.

Before the appointed day of departure for home the long-awaited authority to wear the gold star arrived from London. This was in the shape of a copy of Admiral Sims's Confidential Bulletin, in which it was stated that both his office and the British Admiralty had awarded gold stars to the American converted yachts *Venetia* and U. S. S. *Surveyor*, each having surely destroyed at least one submarine. In the opinion of Admiral Sims the *Venetia* should have been awarded two stars, since apparently it must have been she who disabled the U-39, now interned with other U-boats in the port of Cartagena. This view of the matter, however, the Admiralty declined to adopt in the absence of what it considered incontrovertible proof; and this in spite of the fact that the American admiral had based his latter opinion upon the diary of a junior officer of the U-59, which stated that it must have been the converted yacht *Venetia*, well known on account of her *conspicuous camouflage*. This, it will be remembered, was afterwards changed to battle gray, because, as discovered from an interned German, she had become an object of superstitious dread.

There was general joy aboard the now officially honored little ship. Two governments had awarded her a gold star, and, while the records of the Navy Department would strictly name two avengers of the *Lusitania*, for reasons already enumerated, all aboard the *Venetia* felt quite justified in declining to consent to such partnership, with a divided glory which they could not bring themselves to believe should have been so arbitrarily insisted upon. So the chief machinist was

MOLES AND DOCKS AT "GIB"

HOMEWARD BOUND!

directed to begin the construction of a gold star at once. Then, following the assured belief of Admiral Sims, who had expressed his opinion that in all fairness there should be two, the order was increased by one star—he being the only recognized commander of the American Navy abroad—so the two stars were duly completed and mounted on the funnel top out at sea, one on either side.

# CHAPTER XXXV

## HOMEWARD BOUND

GOOD-BYE TO THE WAR ZONE—TOWING LITTLE FELLOWS HOME—ANOTHER CHRISTMAS AT SEA—A REAL AMERICAN NEW YEAR'S EVE—A BUSY RUN TO THE VIRGIN ISLANDS.

JUST before departing from the zones of war—let it be hoped for all time—the mail brought many packages of gifts intended to be opened on Christmas, and it was decided to leave the seals and knotted strings untouched until that day, when they would be opened with as much extravagant ceremony as the Danielsian naval regulations would permit. From the Y. M. C. A. came enough tobacco and cigarettes to make a substantial package for every man in the ship's company, and the filling of the refrigerators with a liberal supply of turkeys gave evidence that, gastronomically, at least, there would be nothing lacking that could provide for both wardroom and forecastle mess a true American Christmas dinner.

At 8:15 on the morning of Saturday, December 21, 1918, good-bye was said to Gibraltar, be it acknowledged with but few tinges of regret. Not only because with that farewell would come a steaming away for home, but there had been for some days a stubborn lack of cordiality among our presupposedly Allied friends

that had not made them objects for cherished memory. When the *Venetia* was well under way, however, and had swung around the mole toward Europa Point, there came a sudden change of sentiment, at least among the Allied naval forces in the harbor. Decks of war-vessels were manned, and cheers given and returned which had real heartiness in them, and the echoes followed the departing ships out into the broad Atlantic.

It was indeed a stately towing squadron that pointed to the westward that morning, and there were now no muttered complaints at having been assigned to the menial occupation of towing. Most of the war-vessels had scored heavily in the more important duties of war and were now glad to pass the tow-lines to the little submarine chasers, who could not be expected to make some of the long laps on the homeward voyage always under their own power. There were sixteen of these saucy little fellows in all. The *Venetia* assumed charge of submarine chaser 223; the *Hannibal* towed two, the *Castine* two, and the *Cythera*, *Ossipee*, *Algonquin*, and *Lydonia* one each. When well under way the tow-lines were cast off and the chasers followed their respective guard-ships at a safe distance, but close enough to call for aid should occasion require. This occurred more than once even on the short run to the Azores, for the heavy engines of the chasers are greedy consumers of fuel; and it was decided that in order to avoid untoward delay in the future, each of the little fellows would be given a tow for one day in turn, for with one of them in tow the speed of the entire squadron must be reduced to nearly one-half.

Christmas Eve came accompanied by balmy airs and a smooth sea, and preparations were begun for the proper celebration of the all-important holiday to follow.

There were no longer any restrictions in respect to lights at night, and the wardroom piano might be strummed to the heart's content of anyone who could play it, whether or no anyone within hearing distance was in need of rest or sleep. The war was over, and the squadron on merry homeward way, following the long-awaited declaration of peace and the final orders to depart. Such of the decorations as had been preserved after a similar but somewhat restricted celebration of the year before were gotten out and hung in the wardroom and crew's quarters, while those who remembered the customs of the youth-time hung their socks in conspicuous places, so that thoughtful friends might test their capacities as far as the somewhat meagre conveniences of that nature could be expected to permit.

Early on Christmas morning everyone was astir and gifts were presented, interchanged, and bargained for, with not a soul on board who had not been remembered by someone. The packages from home were opened amid smiles, exclamations, and tears of joy; the brave men of the *Venetia*, after eighteen months of grueling duty through many dangers, had become boys again in celebration of the coming of Santa Claus. There were safety-razors, jack-knives, comfort-kits, sewing-kits, candies, nuts, raisins, handerchiefs, socks and helmets and mufflers knitted by waiting loved ones before it was known that the war was so suddenly to end.

Everywhere about the ship the spirit of home at Christmas-tide was gloriously present; for the first time the confined limits of the now victorious *Venetia* seemed a veritable home, lacking only the presence of loved ones; the Christmas dinner was as liberally toothsome, turkey, mince pie and all, as the most lavish home could have wished for, and only the cranberries were lacking.

LIBERTY PARTY LANDING

THE CONCEALED BEAUTY OF PONTA DELGADA

It was a wondrous day, this home-coming Christmas of the year of our Lord 1918, and one that will always be remembered by the now dispersed and widely separated company of the *Venetia*.

At Ponta Delgada, which was reached on the day after Christmas, there passed a week of entertainment, reunions of long-separated friends, interchanges of experiences, and the spinning of yarns anent the strenuous times that were before the coming of peace. The little harbor of Ponta Delgada, which is only a breakwater and a corresponding stretch of shore, seemed heavy with the joy of home-coming, for it was full to the point of congestion with every manner of craft, those of war as well as of peace, and all homeward bound.

The memory of the last year's almost silent New Year's Eve at Bermuda was still lingering in the minds of those who had been forced to share its distressing quietude; but it was forever swept into oblivion by the wild outbreak that followed the dozens of clangs of "Eight bells" at the birth of the last year of the *Venetia's* war days. Steam whistles and sirens shrieked, all bells in the town were rung, over and over again, and the pandemonium continued until it seemed as though the instruments of it must have grown tired and mutinied themselves into silence, or else the thousands of merry roysterers had insisted upon being permitted to "hear themselves think."

Ponta Delgada seemed now to have taken on the celebrant attitude of the rest of the countries of the world, save only those to whom war is second nature or a means of elevation to wealth and power to be secured in no other way. It revealed beauties that it was never known to possess before, and its people, once kindly but unresponsive, had become insistently hospitable and

riotously demonstrative. In point of fact the entire week was one of constant celebration and conviviality, and there were never on any day ceremonies "at the mast," because the various officers of the deck never made any records of the behavior of returning shore parties and the officer of the shore patrol saw no necessity under the joyous circumstances for being at all vigilant or inquisitive.

On the 2nd of January the great fleet of homeward-bound craft bade farewell to the Azores and proceeded due west in four squadrons, led by the *Algonquin*, *Ossipee*, and *Castine* and followed by the *Hannibal*, *Chestnut Hill*, *Lapwing*, *Ontario*, *Lydonia*, *Cythera*, and *Sonoma*. Memory of the stormy voyage of the "suicide fleet" of the winter before was revived by the appearance of bad weather, which necessitated very slow progress of the four squadrons, and extraordinary care in the guarding of the increased fleet of submarine chasers, which were often compelled to battle their way in fours to the *Chestnut Hill* for fuel oil. This was no easy task in the heavy sea, for the oil had to be supplied to each of them through a long hose, which it was not only difficult to line aboard, but even more so to hold when it was gotten there.

Fortunately the weather moderated, and in order to avoid if possible further storms, the course was altered slightly to the southward, in the direction of what are known as the "horse latitudes," where it is generally calm. Constant communication of a most intimate nature was continuously preserved between the many vessels of the four squadrons through the unrestricted use of the recently installed wireless telephones, which made conversation quite as effective at sea as it could possibly be by means of the wire lines ashore. Confiden-

tial communication, however, is not possible through this system, for every receiver within the prescribed radius can easily hear what is said and there are naturally many "listeners-in."

An amusing incident illustrative of this lack of secret communication was told by a listener-in aboard of the *Venetia*. Captain Joyer of the *Hannibal* was the ranking officer of the four squadrons and consequently their commodore. He was a great stickler for good form and in good or bad weather was sure to specify what uniform should be worn for the day. On this particular morning the order was telephoned from the flagship:

"Hello, everybody! The uniform for the day will be 'whites.'"

Then from the commander of one of the ever-unsteady chasers:

"Hello, flagship! Does that order apply to the chasers?" To which Captain Joyer himself replied:

"No! Who the dickens would suspect them of belonging to the navy anyway?"

A few days later the "flag" again telephoned that "whites" would be the uniform for the day, when someone answered from one of the other ships:

"We're out of pants. Been wearing whites ever since we left Gibraltar."

Then all of the "listeners-in" heard the following reply from the resourceful "flag":

"All right; wear white blouses and blue pants!"

Naturally enough, with his punctilious insistence upon a change of uniform whenever it might happen to appeal to his sense of authority, it could not have occurred to Captain Joyer that lavish entertainment of some kind must be an obvious accompaniment to the coming visit to St. Thomas, that "whites" is the only

proper uniform for those latitudes, and that while the Government supplies the enlisted man with uniforms, the officers must provide their own; and soon numerous pairs of white "pants" were floating to the breezes fore and aft.

Continuous normal speed was not expedient because of the necessity of many reductions to "one-third normal" in order that a group of the chasers might be fueled. Fair progress was made, however, in the existing circumstances, and St. Thomas, the chief port of Uncle Sam's latest purchased possession, the Virgin Islands, was reached shortly after noon on the fourteenth day after leaving the Azores.

THE HARBOR OF ST. THOMAS

LEAVING ST. THOMAS

# CHAPTER XXXVI

## ANOTHER LAP HOMEWARD

BRIEF STAY AT ST. THOMAS—A STRANGE CELEBRATION OF ANNEXATION TO THE UNITED STATES—MANY INTERESTING JAUNTS—BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE—GUANTANAMO AND PANAMA.

IN a pictorial sense, the Virgin Islands purchase must be regarded as having in every way justified the expenditure of the amount of money involved, for it is truly a jewel of the deep well worth having. Its promise of commercial importance will of course depend upon how capable its future business managers are, for it is wonderfully fertile, and there are many places amid the luxuriant growth of the hillsides which offer ideal sites for erection of winter hotels to compete with the British ones in Nassau, Bermuda, and Jamaica. As a strategic naval base in time of war its value cannot be overestimated, a fact already foreshadowed by far-seeing Germany during the years when she was palpably reaching out for vantage-grounds from which to secure a future domination of the world. Ocular proof of this was uncovered when the United States took possession of the massive Hamburg-American building, which is not only larger than commerce in those waters would seem to justify, but military experts have testified that its

heavy stone foundations could have been intended for no other purpose than the mounting of heavy guns.

No sooner had the fleet arrived at St. Thomas than the fruit pedlers and bumboat men and women who came from the shore reported that a great celebration was in progress by way of expressing the people's approval of the annexation to the United States. This of course hastened the hurrying of liberty parties ashore, and the sight presented by the many whale-boats and launches crossing the harbor at full speed created no other impression than that of a great regatta to test the speed and endurance of the small boats of the fleet.

This merry invasion naturally involved the detailing of a strong shore patrol, but soon the patrolmen and their officers became imbued with the spirit of the event and celebrated on their own account, but of course keeping some show of official dignity whenever occasion justly required it. Truly enough it was a gala day, this outpouring of an entire population in ratification of a sale that gave them a change of government, and the ratifying proceedings certainly bore every semblance of overflowing sincerity. It seemed as though every village, hamlet, and plantation for many miles around St. Thomas, as well as the neighboring islands, had become depopulated and the dusky inhabitants hurried to the principal city, clad in their "Sunday best," which means that every man was in immaculate white with straw hat, and every woman caparisoned in gaudy colors and heavy necklaces of native beads. The procession in the afternoon was of surprising length for so comparatively small a population, and in the evening every floor that offered sufficient space for dancing was crowded to overflowing. In most of these functions it was noticed that there was but small distinction drawn

between the lines of race or color. As a matter of fact such a removal of race prejudice was an arbitrary matter if the sailors from the fleet must provide themselves with dancing partners, so they made no distinction whatever, and danced with maidens black, white, yellow, and brown until daylight.

At the official functions and on the dancing floors of hotels, the commissioned officers were not so often subjected to the painful necessity of making or overlooking these distinctions, although there were many cases where olive complexions and "kinky" hair had to be overlooked for the sake of politeness, and in consideration of the fact that, being invited guests, all other guests must be received on terms of absolute equality.

The consensus of opinion aboard the ships was largely to the effect that the dancing partners of St. Thomas, whom the lily farmer had given the name of "Coon Swedes," on account of their peculiar dialect, were only in remote cases to be frowned upon; for all of them were exceedingly courteous and polite to their new fellow-countrymen, and many of them pretty in complexions of pink and white, which caused the few "kinks" in the hair to be almost entirely overlooked.

The stay of eight days at St. Thomas provided for the home-coming heroes a series of dinners, dances, and jaunts through the beautiful environs of the city and the even more attractive ones of the truly poetic little town of Charlotte Amalie, high above the harbor and in places almost concealed amid tangles of tropical growths. There were many chance reunions between old friends, and the Californians met many one-time associates of the training days at San Pedro and other naval bases. The evenings were a succession of jovial entertainment and interchanges of war experiences, while

during the day the roads disclosed endless processions of sightseeing Americans, as though they had appointed themselves on committees of inspection to report on their new possession. Many of them wondered if they had really been misled when the inhabitants, with a seriousness that certainly inspired conviction, assured them that, in spite of its original Oriental flavor, the story of the murderous Bluebeard was not only true, but had actually happened here on the Virgin Islands. The main tower of the original Bluebeard castle where the hapless seven wives were murdered is still standing in a remarkable state of preservation, considering the age of this venerable history; but the original property was bought by an American named Neis, who entirely rebuilt the old castle, leaving only the tower, and a secret underground passage from the old castle crypts to the sea, through which Bluebeard brought his piratical booty. The gardens are gloriously magnificent, and the gorgeous panorama of the harbor of St. Thomas, the many neighboring islands, and the open ocean offers ample proof that if Bluebeard really lived on this beautiful eminence he had an artistic eye as well as a bloody one and selected for himself one of the most attractive "residential sections" in all the world.

So wore away the eight days of this island sojourn amid gayeties and wanderings, and on the ninth day the fleet steamed away followed by the hearty cheers of the newest "job lot" of American citizens. With an egotism that was entirely commendable, the men of the *Venetia* elected to take unto themselves the preponderance of cordiality in those cheers, for the reason that her smoke-stack was the only one in all the assembled fleet that bore the gold stars of naval glory.

There was no incident of note in the plowing of warm

tropical seas during the three days' run to Santo Domingo, save a succession of gorgeous sunsets, dreamings of the home firesides, and a narrowly averted "foursome" collision, owing to a mistake in signals, between the *Venetia*, *Ossipee*, *Algonquin*, and the oilship *Chestnut Hill*. The *Algonquin* (flagship) had signaled a change of direction which all obeyed excepting the *Chestnut Hill*, with the result that in attempting to avoid colliding with her the three other vessels barely avoided ramming each other.

A brief stay had been projected in Santo Domingo, not only for the purpose of dividing the fleet there, but also to afford another opportunity for visiting that very beautiful but hopelessly turbulent "black republic," which for many years the United States has been compelled to invade and subject into at least a semblance of order, in protection of the many valuable American interests there. But there was one of these intermittent disturbances on the point of breaking out when the fleet arrived, following the killing of several marines in the interior a few days before, so it was deemed best to suspend shore leave for all hands. A number of American officers, however, who boarded the *Venetia*, were most flattering in their praise of her, and especially congratulatory when the gold stars were pointed out to them with becoming pride. Some of the chronic "shore-leavers" complained at the withdrawal of their most dearly beloved privilege, but the lily farmer's only regret arose from the fact that he had already visited two ports where the bones of the immortal Columbus were supposed to lie, and it was too bad now to lose the opportunity of bowing his head above the sepulchre which the Santo Domingans asseverate with offers of ample proof is the only real one.

The *Venetia*, figuratively speaking, dropped her anchor and weighed it again almost in the same operation, so brief was the stay, and stood out with the fleet under orders to proceed to Guantanamo, where her routine of naval duty was actually to end. Off Port au Prince the fleet divided, one section going northward, and the *Ossipee* and *Venetia*, each heading a column of chasers, with the *Lydonia* and *Cythera*, bringing up the rear. On the second morning out of Santo Domingo, Guantanamo was reached, and to the delight of everyone aboard, Captain Howell decided to secure permission to be detached from the fleet at once, so that the *Venetia* might make it more safely certain that history would record her as having been the first vessel of war of any type to display the gold star in the Pacific Ocean. The permission was duly granted, but still there was delay.

The *Algonquin* and *Lydonia* did not carry paymasters; "Pay" Schnetzler acted in that capacity for them, and consequently had to "shove off with the pay-roll" for those vessels and exhaust it while the men of the *Venetia* waited. It seemed an age to the now impatiently lingering souls sighing for home, but he at last returned wreathed in smiles; his boat was hoisted in, and Captain Howell ordered Chief Perry to pile on all possible pressure in his boilers and "hike out" for Colon and the Pacific with all the speed of which the ship was capable.

The engines responded to the call of the Chief with unusual alacrity, and the ship had never developed such speed before, even when answering an excited signal to "proceed to the horizon beyond the convoy to investigate a suspicious object." For twenty-four hours this inspiring speed continued, when black smoke in great clouds was belched from the funnels, the vessels slowed

TOUCHING AT GUANTANAMO

THE FIRST GOLD STAR IN THE CANAL

down to probably half-speed, and the captain telephoned to the engine-room:

"What's the matter down there?"

"Oil's gone bad!" was the indignant reply, accompanied by a more or less unprintable phrase, and Colon was finally reached six hours beyond the appointed schedule. When the canal pilot came aboard, he was told that shore leave had been suspended by general acclamation, and there would be no delay in making the passage of the canal. Gatun Reach was entered in much less time than when the *Venetia* had passed on her former visit; the three rises of the Gatun Locks were accomplished without a moment's delay; and the ship plowed through the gorgeous reaches of Gatun Lake indifferent to its almost indescribable beauties, for there seemed to be a soft breeze from the Pacific coming through the Culebra Cut in the far distance, and there was nothing inspirational to *Venetia's* hearts now that did not come to them fresh from their mother ocean. Culebra Cut, Miraflores Lake, and San Miguel Lock were reached and passed almost without notice, and at five minutes past meridian, February 3, 1919, the *Venetia* glided slowly to her dock at Balboa, almost in home waters, with every heart aboard of her throbbing for the beginning of that final lap toward the north and home.

# CHAPTER XXXVII

## GOLDEN GATE AND HOME

OVER NIGHT AT BALBOA—THE POLICE UNFRIENDLY TO THE NAVY—THE LAST LAP BEGUN—EVEN THE GALE SINGS OF HOME—CALL AT SAN DIEGO—HOME AT LAST—THE FINAL CALL TO "COLORS."

AS soon as the chronic liberty-ashore men had made the discovery that the ship would remain at Balboa over night the "Exec's" office was besieged, only to elicit the information that no liberty would be granted, and for once the reason for the suspension was given. Captain Howell had been notified on arrival that for some time past, owing to serious personal clashes between the Canal Zone police and sailors from ships passing through the canal, it had been decided to suspend all leave at Balboa—except in cases where the landing of sailors might be a matter of urgent necessity—and hence the order that brought sullen looks to the "give-me-liberty-or-give-me-death" men.

It would seem to be a singular anomaly that Americans should be pitted against Americans in bloody combat, but nevertheless such is the existing feeling between the jackies of the navy and the Canal Zone police. It should be explained, however, that a large number of these police are natives of the "Zone," and

that they are suspected of themselves precipitating clashes between themselves and the navy men, so that they may quell the riots they themselves have started and in this way add to their records of efficiency. Be this as it may, true or false, the fact still remains that because of frequent fatal encounters such as have been touched upon, all sailors are temporarily denied liberty at Balboa.

Attempts were then made, both by officers and men, to be granted leave for a visit to the ancient city of Panama, when it was learned that such visits may not be made without passes from the Zone authorities. These could not be secured for three days, and, since an early morning start was to be made for California, all hands remained aboard, with the exception of several of the officers who had dreamed themselves into the filmy fallacy that they could find a better dinner in the hotel at Balboa. Again, they assumed that even if it were much worse, added to the change from home cooking there should be new faces to look upon and solid earth instead of rolling waves under their chairs.

Tuesday, February 4, 1919, is written in full, for in addition to other days of special importance which have been similarly "featured"—as they have it in the theatres and newspapers—it was the day on which the *Venetia* began the final lap of the long stretch up the Pacific Coast with an ending at the port of first departure, San Francisco. The morning dawned bright and promising, but heavy with the heat of Panama Bay, which meant that blouses would be omitted from the day's uniform. The start was made at 11 A.M., and every heart thrilled with the joy of the not-far-away homecoming, which so tinted everything about with the radiance of expectancy that even the breeze stirred by

speeding through the hot airs of the Bay of Panama seemed cool and delightful because it was from the Pacific Ocean. As the king can do no wrong; as nothing but good can come of the praising of the Creator, so, in their great and indiscriminative joy, these returning wanderers felt sure on this February morning that nothing but the best ever could possibly be born of the Pacific.

They felt surer than ever of this when, a few hours later, the stuffy atmospheres of the waters about the Canal Zone had been left behind, and a brisk head breeze swept the *Venetia* from stem to stern. Every heart was beating high and every face wreathed in smiles—all but one. Captain Howell, with the burden of a recent sore affliction still bearing heavily upon his heart, shared scarcely any at all in the general spirit of elation that seemed to increase with each added mile that lessened the distance toward the home port. The nearing of the *Venetia's* home meant nothing to him, other than that to reach it was in his line of duty which must be performed, and, that accomplished, his interest in her or her future was a matter of small import as far as sentiment was concerned. Doubtless those to whom he had confided the contents of the saddening message received at Gibraltar read in his tense features what the return to a tenantless home on the opposite coast must mean to him, and kept aloof.

There were others in the ship's company the joy of whose home-coming would be dampened by tears, but these passed by almost unnoticed because the clouds that surrounded them were melted away in the sunshine of gladness that dominated the spirits of the great majority. And indeed there seemed nothing but sunshine during all of that merry voyage northward. The

smiling heavens, the cooling breezes, and those gentle undulations of the sea, without which those who love the sea would be truly lonesome, contributed always to the heartsease of the young patriots whose duties had been fulfilled and were soon to be recorded upon the pages of pleasurable memory.

Even the undependable and usually angry Gulf of Tehuantepec was kindly considerate and had evidently decided not to subject the proud little bearer of the golden stars to any undue strain nor her company to any of the wearing discomforts of stormy weather. Its waters were not calm, it is true, for this they seldom are. But the few hours of the mimic gale seemed to end almost as suddenly as they had begun, and served only to add zest to the general joy which thrice as much heavy weather could not have removed.

This time even the arid coasts and mountains of Lower California seemed strangely beautiful, for were they not after all a California, and was not the *true* California soon to burst upon the home-comers in all its beauty to welcome them?

On the morning of the twelfth day out from Balboa, Coronado Island hove in sight and everyone aboard began to grow more and more impatient. The hours seemed long indeed before Point Loma offered its welcome at noon bathed in sunshine, and each hour was relatively three before the *Venetia* had entered the almost perfect harbor of San Diego at 4:30 P.M. and moored alongside the dock near Fort Rosencrans.

Routine at once became intensely "ragged," if not altogether suspended, for there was a more or less disorderly scramble to telegraph stations and telephone booths, for reasons which may readily be imagined. Those who had mothers, wives, children, or sisters near

at hand flew to happy reunions, while those whose homes were more remote waited anxiously for personal replies to urgent messages. The news of the victorious *Venetia's* arrival, already foreshadowed by radio, spread with the celerity of the first declaration of war, and soon she was besieged by a stream of San Diegans, proud of the achievements of the sometime pleasure craft whose owner was himself proud to claim San Diego as his residence.

On the following morning the owner, with members of his family and a large party of friends, came from San Diego on the fire-boat, full of congratulation for the splendid record made in so brief a period by California's only truly belligerent representative in the war zone. Mr. Spreckels expressed his great pride and satisfaction in that record and felt very grateful indeed to each and every member of the ship's company for having so efficiently assisted in making it. There was an added flush on his ruddy face when the gold stars were pointed out and this record outlined to him. In addition to assisting in two towing squadrons across the ocean, she had been a guard-ship in twenty-eight convoys, numbering in all three hundred fifty-two ships, of which seven were lost and, it is believed, adequately avenged.

On the morning of the third day after leaving San Diego the *Venetia* passed through the Golden Gate and anchored again in Man-o'-War's Row, for the last time as a vessel of war, after having logged 55,000 miles in all weathers without a mishap owing to structural weakness, with a record of which any cruiser might be proud and a golden star on either side of her funnel to perpetuate it during the pleasure-times to come.

Seven days were allowed officers and crew for welcomes home, and those convivial relaxations which only

HOME AGAIN

the natures not narrowed down to strict convention can understand, and to which they were clearly entitled as personal liberty's reward for those eighteen months of patriotic devotion to the service of their country's flag.

On the 27th of February the *Venetia* proceeded to Mare Island Navy Yard, but, because of that official delay which nobody can understand and no one ever offers to explain, the ceremony of going out of commission was not carried out until the 5th of April. Its details were somewhat disappointing, in consideration of the ship's unusual record, for, on account of rain, the band was not present to play the national anthem; so such officers as were aboard assembled on the quarter, Captain Ellicut came aboard accompanied by a bugler, read the orders placing the ship out of commission, the bugler sounded "colors," and all uncovered as the national standard was lowered and the *Venetia's* career as an auxiliary cruiser of the navy of the United States was at an end.

The lily farmer sighed as the *Venetia* was finally moored to the lying up-dock, for it meant that peace had come indeed.

"I wouldn't grow a single shade paler if I were ordered to do it all over again," he said.

"Here too!" cheerily responded a near-by group of hearers, and then a hitherto unsuspected poet drew from his blouse these lines and read them aloud:

VALE!

Down thro' the pleasure years that lie beyond,
No revel deep nor growth of friendships fond
Shall let Forgetfulness pall with its cloud
The lustre of thy deeds that cry aloud
To make men marvel and the whole world proud.

No jealous caviller shall flout thy name,
Nor cast a doubt upon thy well won fame:
No carping pen shall write on Memory's page,
Mocking the war of vengeance thou didst wage,
For it shall light thee to enfeebled age.

The allied chiefs of war acclaim their debt;
Recording tomes shall not thy fame forget;
The shades of Lusitania's martyred drowned
Shall never deafen to the deadening sound
With which Venetia expiation found.

Vale, Venetia! Speed thee unto lands
Where Pleasure reigns and Friendship's voice commands:
But let thy every shroud, and deck, and beam,
Creak ever with the lore of battle's gleam,
Recalling what's but now a war-time dream.

THE END

# ADDENDA

NOT all the confirmatory documents in the case have been obtainable, no doubt for the reason that in view of the great mass of data that has been filed in the Bureau of Naval Intelligence at Washington some of them had not been found at the time when this volume was printed. The Confidential Bulletin of Admiral Sims, mention of which is made on page 236, *supra*, was among the papers of the *Venetia* on her return to the Mare Island Navy Yard; these were collected by Ensign Volney E. Howard—her officer of communications—and mailed to Washington. A letter was addressed to the Bureau of Communications, under date of July 24, 1919, asking for a transcript of the *Venetia's* record, and after much delay, the following somewhat incomplete reply was received:

[Washington, D. C.] 24 October 1919

Mr. Clay M. Greene,
J. D. & A. B. Spreckels Securities Company,
Oceanic Building,
2 Pine Street, Corner of Market Street,
San Francisco, Cal.

Dear Sir:—

In reply to your letter of July 24, 1919 addressed to the Bureau of Communications and referred to the Historical Section of the Office of Naval Intelligence. It is believed that the following data taken from the War Diary of the U. S. S. *Venetia* and the records of

submarine encounters shown in the Oversea Files of this Office, will give you the information desired.

[Then follows a detailed account of the several encounters with submarines precisely as have already been described in these pages—excepting, strangely enough, the stirring first engagement of April 22.]

FROM OVERSEAS RECORDS

May 11, 1918.

Force Comdr.'s Staff reports, May 11th Lat. 38° 17′ N Long. 8° 05′ E at 0339. while in slow convoy the USS VENETIA observed wake of a torpedo which crossed ahead and sunk the SUSETTE FRAISISETTE [sic]. VENETIA dropped depth charges. No results. VENETIA cruised widening circles close to wreckage of torpedoed ship and sighted Subm. awash 8 miles distant. VENETIA headed full speed for Subm. but it submerged before VENETIA came in range. Nothing more seen of it.

July 11 1918.

Intelligence Section of Force Comdr.'s Office reports that USS VENETIA recently made a determined attack on a submarine which attacked a Mediterranean Convoy. The VENETIA remained behind the convoy for two hours for the purpose of keeping the submarine down at the end of which time the submarine was sighted on the horizon and again attacked. This submarine was later sunk by a British Submarine in the Adriatic and in her log was found an entry, that further attack on convoy in question was prevented by the activities of the VENETIA. On the occasion in question the VENETIA was able to use only twelve depth charges; since then she has been fitted with 30 charges of 300 lbs. each. Commander Porterfield has been commended by the British Admiral commanding the Mediterranean, and by the U. S. Admiral commanding at Gibraltar and by the Force Commander.

In regard to U-Boat 39 mentioned in your letter as the destroyer Lusitania, the British Admiralty report, January 1, 1919, that that submarine was interned at Cartigena [sic] May 19, 1918.

C. C. MARSH, *Captain*, USN., (Ret.)
Officer-in-Charge,
Historical Section.

# ADDENDA

### FROM A WASHINGTON NEWSPAPER

Under date of March 2, 1919, the Washington *Times* reproduced a photograph of the *Venetia*, under the display headline, "The Vessel that Avenged Lusitania," and with the following descriptive legend.

This boat is the avenger of the *Lusitania*. Converted into a bomber, the former yacht sank with a depth bomb the U-39, the submarine that it is generally supposed sent the big liner to the bottom. From Germany has come the report that the naval officer that ordered the firing of the torpedoes was on this U-boat when it was sunk or disabled. Before being fitted up as a bomber this vessel was owned by John D. Spreckels, the sugar magnate, and was known as the *Venetia*.

### EVIDENCE FROM A SERVICE MAGAZINE

In its issue for April, 1919, *The Short Circuit*, a monthly magazine published at the Mare Island Navy Yard, contains an article concerning the record of the *Venetia*. It is reproduced here to show that in naval quarters the scattered reports of her achievements have been accepted as almost indisputable facts:

The *Venetia*, the pleasure yacht owned by John D. Spreckels which was turned over to the Government at the outbreak of the war, is home again. She brings with her one of the highest records attained by any naval vessel. The *Venetia* carries a gold star on her stack, given her by the British and American governments for destroying at least one submarine.

The crippling of the U-39, the German submarine that sank the *Lusitania*, and forcing her to seek refuge in a Spanish port, there to be interned for the duration of the war; cruising more than 54,000 miles in the war zone without a breakdown; assisting in the repulse of three U-boat attacks in a single night—is only a part of the thrilling record of the *Venetia*.

The *Venetia* was the only converted pleasure yacht which remained in the naval service of the United States until the end of the war, and the only vessel from the Pacific Coast to return to home waters with a gold star on her stack. . . . .

From the time that the *Venetia* made her first trip from Ponta

Delgada, in the Azores, on February 8, 1918, she began making records for herself and history for the world. On this trip she steamed 2436 miles, and on February 21 she was assigned to Mediterranean duty, making two trips from Gibraltar to the French Algiers before encountering any submarines.

On the morning of April 22 a wireless was picked up telling of the torpedoing of the British steamer *Dronning Maud*, about 60 miles northeast of Algiers. The *Venetia* rushed to the spot and in a short encounter sank the submarine. It is probably for this that she wears the gold star.

The *Venetia's* second encounter occurred on May 11, 160 miles north of Algiers. The submarine, which was later found to be the U-59, fired a torpedo at the *Venetia* which missed by a small three feet and, passing its mark, hit the French steamship *Susette Fraissinet*, which sank in fifteen minutes. Following the wake of the torpedo, the *Venetia* dropped several depth bombs. Later the U-59 was sunk in the Adriatic and from her log, which was captured, it was found that the depth charges dropped by the little craft had done considerable damage to the submarine.

On May 17 the *Venetia* had her most thrilling experience when two subs attacked the convoy. The first torpedo fired by the subs struck the *Sculptor*, laden with aeroplanes, ambulances and supplies for the troops operating on the Salonika front. The *Sculptor* was beached the next day and destroyed by an explosion. The sub was the U-39, the one which sank the *Lusitania*. She was damaged so badly by the *Venetia's* depth charges that she had to put into port at Cartagena, Spain, where she was interned. The other sub, operating with the U-39, attacked the other two vessels of the convoy, but the *Venetia* was too busy with the U-39 to take part in repulsing the second sub. One of the vessels was sunk in one minute, but the other managed to reach port.

The last sub encountered by the *Venetia* was on July 23, about 125 miles northeast of Algiers, when the British steamer *Messidor* was sunk. The entire convoy fired on the sub, which was destroyed, the credit of its destruction going to the convoy instead of the *Venetia*.

The danger in which the crew of the *Venetia* operated may well be guessed when it is known that she carried with her thirty 300-pound depth charges of T. N. T., the most powerful explosive used in warfare. Had a torpedo struck her there would have been nothing left but a few splinters. She also carried four 3-inch 50-caliber guns and two Colt's automatics.

Fighting subs was not the only thing that the *Venetia* had to contend with. On her trip to the war zone from Philadelphia she passed through a heavy storm at sea, and when she reached the commander of the American forces at Gibraltar, a part of her cabin was caved in and the upper works partially demolished by the gale.

"When will you be ready for duty?" asked Rear Admiral Alfred Niblack, in charge of the American forces at sea in the war zone.

"At once," was the terse reply of Captain Porterfield, and he proved it by going to duty the next day on convoy work.

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ON THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF NOVEMBER, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND NINETEEN, WAS COMMITTED TO PRESS THIS HISTORY OF VENETIA, AVENGER OF THE LUSITANIA, BY CLAY M. GREENE, DESIGNED AND SUPERVISED BY PORTER GARNETT, WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR BY C. D. ROBINSON AND W. A. COULTER, ORNAMENTS BY A. N. MERRYMAN, JNR., AND DECORATIVE END-PAPERS BY HAROLD VON SCHMIDT. THE PROCESS ENGRAVINGS BY THE SIERRA ART AND ENGRAVING COMPANY. THE PRINTING BY THE H. S. CROCKER COMPANY, INCORPORATED, OF SAN FRANCISCO

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